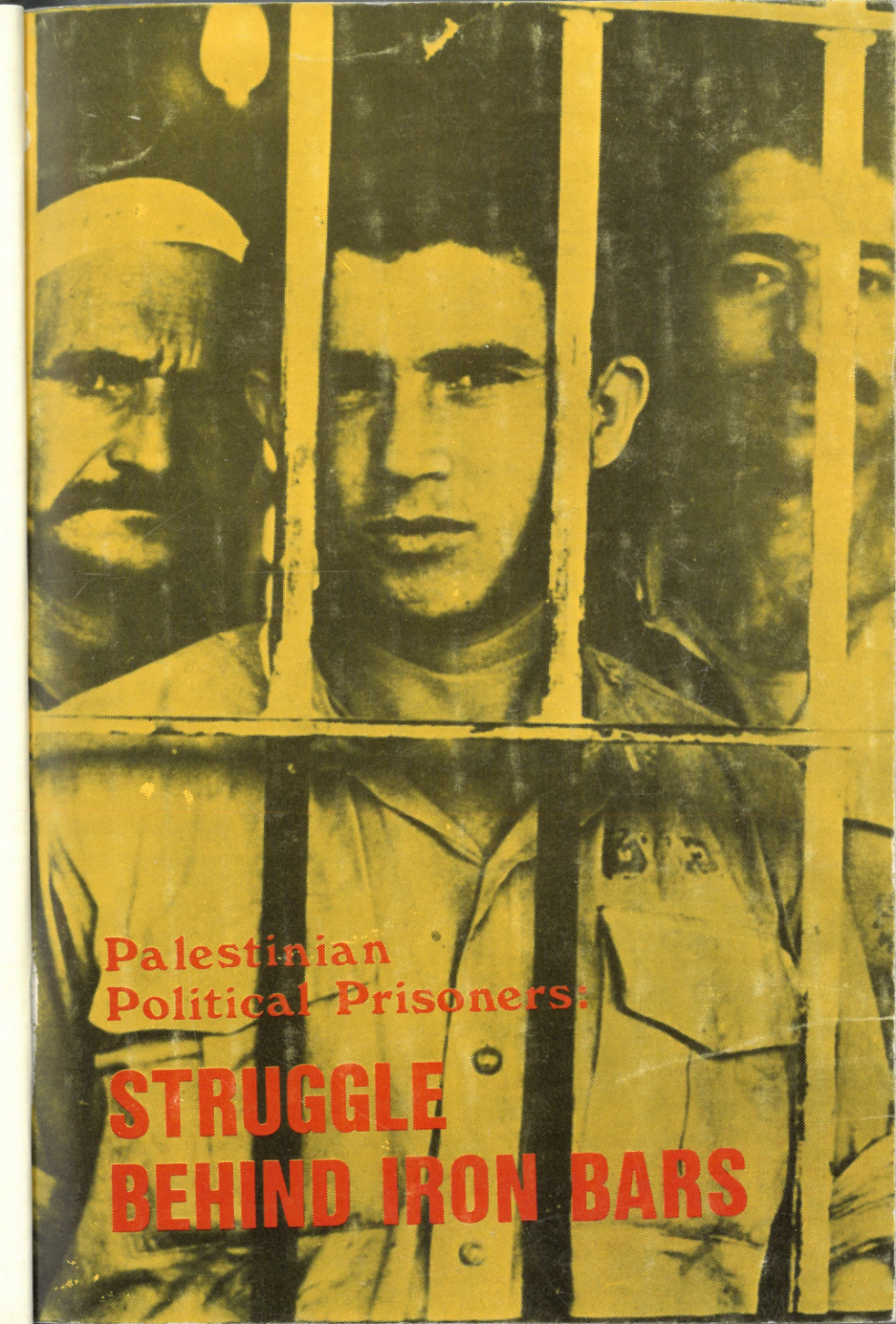




**Palestinian
Political Prisoners:**

**STRUGGLE
BEHIND IRON BARS**

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Political Prisoners:*

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BEHIND IRON BARS**

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OF POLITICAL PRISONERS
IN ISRAELI JAILS

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
HASSAN AL-SAGHIR.....	7
ABDEL RAHIM JABER.....	17
MAHMOUD ABUD DANHASH	25
KHALID ABDEL RAHIM ALI	31
KAMAL NAMMARY.....	38
NAWAF AL-ZARROW.....	44
GHASSAN KAMAL.....	54
AIDA SAAD.....	60
RIMA TANNUS.....	71
RASMEYA AUDI.....	82
ALIA ABU DAYYA.....	95
WORLD MILITANTS.....	102

The torture of Palestinian detainees in Zionist jails has become clear and undeniable. The London Sunday Times "Insight" Report on July 19, 1977 and the two secret cables dated May 31 and November 30, 1978 sent by Alexandra Johnson from the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem to the State Department and published in the Washington Post on February 7, 1979, are but a few examples of reports detailing this torture.

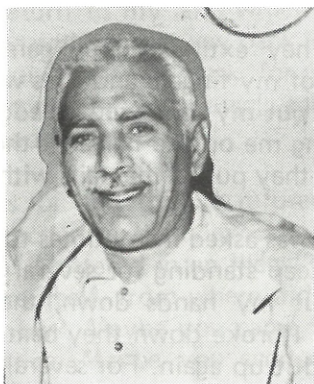
On March 14, 1979, 76 Palestinian political prisoners were liberated from this suffering in Zionist jails and received with open arms by the Palestinian people in the occupied homeland and outside. The incident itself is a significant turning point in the Palestinian-Zionist struggle, the core of the Middle East conflict.

Most important, however, is the strong, persistent and determined will that these militants kept glowing in their hearts through their long years of imprisonment. The occupiers failed to suppress this will in spite of their brutal and inhuman practices. Palestinian prisoners turned their solitary cells into extended bases of the revolution and transformed their pain and suffering into a daily challenge and defiance to their jailers.

In the following pages, some of these liberated militants will tell their own story of their imprisonment behind the iron bars of the Zionist jails.

**PLO UNIFIED INFORMATION
FOREIGN INFORMATION DEPARTMENT**

HASSAN AL-SAGHIR
BORN: 1939
ARRESTED: 1969



I was arrested on 31 December 1969 in the Galilee area in 1948-occupied Palestine. On my way back to my base, I found myself surrounded by enemy soldiers. I clashed with them for half an hour after which I succeeded in breaking my way out of the siege. I hid among the trees till darkness, then I continued on my way. But then I fell from a high rock and broke my leg. I had no choice but to creep under the trees, not knowing which way to go. My leg swelled severely. For two days I didn't have any water or food. I was very tired, so I went to sleep. I woke up to find five enemy soldiers surrounding me, one of them pushing the barrel of his gun against the back of my head. After beating me severely, they blindfolded me, tied my hands and dragged me some distance until I was thrown into a jeep. I was taken to Acre (in the north of 48-occupied Palestine) prison.

TORTURE

The interrogation lasted for more than two months. I don't think that any of us went through

the interrogation without becoming ill or disabled. I myself almost lost my hearing in one of my ears, and now suffer from rheumatism.

They extinguished cigarettes on my skin. The nails of my fingers and toes were brutally pulled out. They put my hands on the edge of a table and started beating me on the nails till they swelled up and bled. Then they pulled the nails with pincers.

I was asked many times to hold up a heavy object and keep standing for several hours. Whenever I tried to put my hands down, they started beating me. After I broke down they beat me and demanded that I hold it up again. For several days I was left without food or water. They would tie my hands with a rope and hang me from a tree. I was left that way for several hours till my wrists bled. After that they put me into a sack and threw me in front of police dogs that would attack and bite me. When they let me have a rest, they tied my hands and legs and threw me into a small narrow cell, the floor of which was filled with water. I could neither sit nor sleep.

All these tortures were inflicted because I refused to give the names of the group I went into occupied Palestine with, or the names of people we met there. I refused as well to show them on the map the base I came from.

THE TRIAL

During the trial I was charged with belonging to an 'illegal' organisation, i.e. the PLO, crossing the 'Israeli' border without a permit, belonging to an armed group, organizing groups inside 'Israel', and clashing with the Israeli forces. The judge asked me to admit my guilt, but I refused and told them: 'My

organisation, the PLO, is a legal one and represents the struggle and aspirations of my people whom you drove out of their land. Its legality is recognized by all the forces of peace and justice in the world. It is my duty and right to return to my land which you drove me out of. Nothing will bar my way back and I will never recognize your entity nor ask for your permission to return. It is my duty to struggle against you for the sake of my people and cause.'

After three sessions of the trial, I refused to admit guilt and didn't recognize their law. I said to the judge: 'You say that I entered in an illegal way. But I want to ask you yourself, from where did you come to my land, and how? Maybe you came from America, Europe or Africa. Maybe you even came from an Arab country. Did you come here in a legal way? You, who infiltrated into my country and usurped my land and home, are trying me, the owner of the land and the home. What an irony! '

The judge got angry and shouted: 'Shut up! ' Some policemen started beating me. After that I was given a life sentence. There were reporters attending the trial. When a pressman noticed me laughing, he came towards me asking: 'You have received a life sentence, but you are laughing.' I said: 'It's a medal of honour to decorate my militant march.'

RAMLE PRISON

After that I was taken by two policemen to a military car. The car drove to the Ramle prison. I was put in a special wing called 'Argav'. There I met my fellow militants and began adapting my life to the conditions in the prison.

The Ramle prison is a central one with access for

visitors from abroad. This makes the treatment in this prison relatively better than in other prisons, for propaganda purposes. Prisoners were supplied with books: books of history, religion and political books. History books are totally forged, especially those that deal with the Arab-Zionist conflict. They distort the justice of our cause and the rights of our people; they give all the right to the Jewish people as being 'chosen by God'. The land is 'theirs', and they have the 'right' to live on it.

STRUGGLE

Late in 1970, our fellow prisoners in Ashkelon prison declared a hunger strike in protest against living conditions in the prison. A meal was not sufficient even for a five-year-old child. They were badly treated: daily beaten, tortured and lashed. Even their relatives, whenever they came to visit them, were beaten and insulted. Health conditions were deteriorating. So we declared a hunger strike in Ramle prison in solidarity with our fellow prisoners in Ashkelon.

The prison chief, Ilias, asked us: 'What have you got to do with those in Ashkelon? You have your own conditions and they have theirs. Everything is 'Besceider' going well..'

Our answer was simply that: 'We are members of the same revolution. Everywhere in your prisons, we consider ourselves united. It is our duty to confront you, so that our fellow prisoners may have human living conditions.' His reaction was: 'If you go on strike, I will transfer you to your fellows in Ashkelon'. And so he did. I was one of the group transferred.

ASHKELON

All the prisoners were participating in the hunger strike. Even those with bad health insisted on taking part. Abdel Kader Abu Al-Fahm, former leader of the popular liberation forces in Gaza in 1968, died while carrying out the strike. He was very ill but refused to end his hunger strike, saying: 'I am one of you, and I will continue with you.' Another militant, Khalil from Khan Younis, suffered health breakdown and had to have his leg amputated.

The strike in a prison is the most effective weapon you have against your enemy. The reaction of the prison authorities was to force-feed those who passed out and lost consciousness, using a plastic pipe through the mouth into the abdomen. This caused an ulcer in many cases. This was meant to destroy the strikers physically and psychologically in a slow way.

IN BEIT LEED PRISON

In 1972, I was transferred with others to Beit Leed prison. There, we found the same suffering and bitter conditions. We had to struggle to have our social conditions improved, to have better treatment and living conditions.

We started to organize ourselves and to be alert for agents the enemy was trying to plant among us. Moreover, we began to prepare cultural programs and to mobilize ourselves against the Zionist propaganda.

Later that year, the situation in the prison worsened and our relations with the prison authorities deteriorated. As usual, we had our own leadership in the prison and a reserve one in case the acting one

was moved to another prison. After that we declared a strike.

On the seventh day of the strike, the general director of the prison, Neir, and the minister of police, Shlomo Helil, came to question us. We gave them our demands. They said that they would answer all our demands if we ended the strike. But our experience with their promises and words of 'honour' convinced us to refuse to end the strike unless our demands were met first. Their reaction was to use the most oppressive measures against us. At the beginning of 1973, they transferred some of us to Beersheba prison under the pretext of our being leaders of the strike. I was one of those transferred.

IN BEERSHEBA PRISON

Our living conditions and treatment were no better. The organizational matters were wretched. There were some privileges for those who agreed to work in the workshops related to the prison. Of course these privileges arose from the fact that these prisoners were strengthening the Zionist economy and providing additional manpower to the enemy. They made clothes, towels and carpets for the Zionist soldiers and camouflage nets for their tanks. So we began to organize them, rebuild their spirit and teach them that any work that benefits the enemy is treason against our cause and people. The enemy considers us terrorists and deals with us on that basis. So any contribution from our side to his economy contradicts our revolutionary principles and is a betrayal of the cause we believe in and has put us in prison.

NO WORK FOR THE ZIONIST WAR ECONOMY

"This was not an easy task for us. It took us several months until our efforts were fruitful. After that we declared a strike. We called for better treatment, better meals — both in quantity and quality — and an end to work in the workshops. That was the period of the October war. We told our fellow prisoners that it was treason to work in the Zionist workshops and replace the Zionist workers who went to the front to fight our people and nation. We said this to the prison director, Berzlai: 'We came to destroy you, not to work for you. If we were to do any work in the prison, it would be for our own and our brothers' benefit, but not yours. We work in the kitchen, wash our clothes, assist our sick comrades, but we will not work in your factories and workshops'.

"He offered us an improvement in our conditions, an increase in the quantity of food for our meals, and a longer visiting period, all on the condition that we end the strike and resume work in the workshops. We rejected the offer saying that the issue of work is the corner stone of our struggle inside the prison.

"Meanwhile we refused to go out during the daily half-hour breaks to meet our relatives during the visiting periods, to accept anything from the headquarters of the prison, or to meet the Red Cross representatives.

"Then we escalated our struggle. Every day we would get 5 or 6 persons to beat a soldier or an officer in the prison. We knew that this would increase their enmity and revenge against us. But it was meant to destroy the enemy's morale. We wanted to

prove to them that we could confront them even though we were weaponless in their prisons.

EDUCATION

"Some of our fellow prisoners were uneducated or even illiterate. But some of us were teachers or able to teach. The Red Cross supplied us with the books we needed: on educational, historical, philosophical, political and religious subjects. We supplied our library with about 500 books. We had our own programs for education and general knowledge. We held lectures on different subjects. We studied the Arab-Israeli conflict: how and when did it start. How to deal with it. Of course, these books were written from the Zionist point of view, but we had our own evaluation and analysis. Within four years, we rebuilt the political personality of our fellow militants in the prison, after a period of hopelessness.

"It is true that we suffered very much in the prisons. But we were able to transform the sufferings and pains into a revolutionary knowledge which strengthened our belief in our revolution and cause. We used to prepare our own studies concerning certain incidents and to come out with a comprehensive scientific analysis about them. From the first disengagement of forces between the Sadat regime and Israel we came to the conclusion that Sadat was not going the right way. His visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 was no surprise to us because our impression was that Sadat was leading the way towards recognizing Israel and betraying the Arab as well as the Palestinian cause.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

"Our sources of information were the Israeli radio

and press, and from time to time other foreign newspapers. Of course, the news that the Israeli radio and press conveyed was totally forged, but our experience made us capable of reading between the lines. For example, when the news said that a fire broke out or an explosion erupted in a factory, we guessed that there was a commando operation behind it. When the news said that there was a military operation by commandos and two Israelis received light wounds, we surmised that the real number was three or four times as great. This was confirmed by our fellow fighters who were arrested after clashes with the Israeli soldiers.

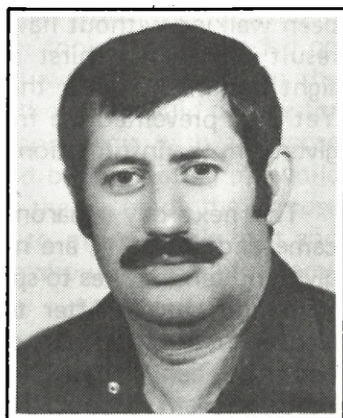
“Some of us in Beersheba prison knew English, and others knew Hebrew. We had an administrative committee, an organizational committee, an interrogation committee and a cultural committee. Each ran its own affairs: The cultural committee, for example, was responsible for preparing a report under the title: ‘Know Your Enemy’. We studied the structure of the Zionist entity and the distinction between the oriental and Western Jews. Zionist society is a society of exploitation, afflicted with the ailments of individual selfishness, a bourgeoisie and bureaucracy. One should not be deceived by the Kibbutz and Maabarot phenomena. All these are meant for propaganda purposes for the outside world public. The Zionist entity has an imperialist structure based on extreme exploitation. It is not democratic as they proclaim. There is some kind of formal democracy on the Knesset level, but the final word is always reserved for the ruling military junta.

“However, the prison authorities did not approve of our organizational, cultural and educational activities. They considered these activities, though we were within the prison, as violating their security. Haiem

Halivi, the director of the prisons, sent an investigative team to the prison, but we refused to meet them. He then came with a police squad who rushed into our rooms and began inspections. They began beating us and rounded up about 90 of us. Halivi began shouting and screaming at us saying: 'What does this mean? Are you establishing your own authority in the prison? There will be no authority inside the prisons except mine! '

"They took us then to Toulkarm prison. After that I was transferred to Jenin prison. I stayed there till my release."

ABDEL RAHIM JABER
BORN: 1938
ARRESTED: 1968



I was arrested in very difficult conditions. My arrest was after the "Night of Bombs" in Jerusalem and the explosion in the central station in Tel Aviv. I knew that I was being pursued by the Israeli soldiers. I kept out of sight till I met with them face to face in Wadi-Araba. A fierce battle took place between a comrade of mine and myself on one hand and the Israeli soldiers on the other. My comrade was killed and I received 16 wounds all over my body and head, so I could resist no more. This was on 21 September 1968. On my arrest, I was severely beaten before receiving any first aid. Then I was carried to a nearby-landing helicopter. Meanwhile, I was bleeding badly. My legs were tied by a rope to the bottom of the helicopter, which took off leaving me hanging in space. I lost consciousness and woke up later in Beersheba hospital. I received some first aid, but the Israeli secret service refused to let me remain hospitalized, and insisted on taking me to Sarafand prison.

There, I was in very wretched health. For four days before the clash with the Zionist soldiers, I had

been walking without having any food or water. As a result of hunger, thirst and loss of blood, my eye sight became so weak that I couldn't find my way. Yet they prevented me from sleeping, insisting that I give them the information they wanted.

The next day Aharon Yariv, minister of police, came and said, 'We are not going to let you sleep. I give you ten minutes to speak or I'll know what to do with you then.' After ten minutes he brought an electric instrument connected to wires which he fastened to my ears. It gave electric shocks which violently shook my entire body. I felt great pain and shouted involuntarily. This process was repeated for several days.

When it failed to make me confess, they used another kind of torture. They put a thin straw — like instrument into my penis so violently that it bled after they pulled the instrument out. This was in addition to extinguishing cigarettes on my body, especially in my wounds. The deliberate exploitation of my wounds hurt me so much that I lost conscious many times. This occurred eight times in 52 days, after which they would take me to Hadassa hospital. In addition to this physical torture, they used to carry me and move around to other cells to make me see other militants being tortured and beaten while hanging upside down from the roof. This was a psychological torture meant to make me confess.

On the 25th. day of my arrest, I suffered from gangrene in my broken leg and bugs began to creep from beneath the bandage on it. They took me back to Hadassa hospital where they put me in the yard. People crowded around me and began beating and torturing me to the satisfaction of the policemen there, who passively stood by smiling. But when my

life became endangered, they took me in a Land Rover to a helicopter which took off and landed on the roof of the hospital. I was hospitalized in the maternity section, which I thought would be safe for me. But after they had supplied me with a glucose unit, some women came and began beating me while some of them tried to cut the pipes of the glucose unit and others attempted to make a hole in it and add water to it. I began to shout till a doctor came and shooed them away.

After that I was taken to Ramle prison where I was kept alone in a separate cell. The treatment there was very bad. For ten months I wasn't allowed to be visited by relatives or to have any contacts with them.

After that I was taken for trial in Hebron prison.

TRIAL

I was charged on 11 counts. It is true that I had clashed with them, but I was charged with being the leader of the forces in the occupied territories. During the trial, the judge read the charges and called me to admit them, saying: "Be a man and confess." My response was "I don't suspect my courage and manhood, but I am totally skeptical of you and your legitimacy. What right do you have to try me on my land?" He added, "You are infiltrator into other people's land and your rifle is not licensed." I said, "The land is mine and I have the right to come and live on it."

Eventually, I was given five life sentences plus 54 years. After the sentencing, I was taken to Ashkelon prison where I stayed till I was liberated.

ASHKELON PRISON

In Ashkelon, I was held for 40 days in solitary confinement after which I was taken to the director of the prison, who warned me against any activity or provocation. He warned that otherwise I would be subjected to "more beating and torture". After that I was taken to a room where I met other militants. It was the first time I had met another Palestinian or Arab for about eleven months. The militants there formed a very tight unity. They noticed my poor health and received me in a very revolutionary and militant manner. They saved me a special place which they covered with a mattress. They did all they could to make me feel comfortable. They made a decision to give me all their daily shares of meat and eggs to help my health improve and my wounds recover. Though each prisoner's share of meat was only about 30 grams daily, I was able to eat the portions of about 20 persons, and it was a sufficient meal.

In two months, I had recovered and my health was good. When I became able to walk again and go out during the daily half an hour break, I found the conditions difficult and the treatment unbearable. Prisoners have to walk in twos. They mustn't talk or turn their heads right or left. The regulations were oppressive. A patient may suffer without anybody being allowed to treat him. It is true that there was a "pharmacy" in the prison, but the medicine the pharmacist gave for all kinds of ailments was aspirin: If you had an ulcer, he gave you an aspirin. If you had rheumatism, he gave you an aspirin. Nothing but this "magic" aspirin. Once a prisoner jokingly told the pharmacist, "I have a psychiatric disorder." He was given an aspirin.

Concerning nutrition, believe me that the soup was

full of millet mixed with particles of rice and sand. The meal was half an egg, three or four spoonfuls of rice, two or three olives, a piece of butter, and a small amount of jam.

"PAPA... PAPA..."

I was prevented from receiving letters from, or sending any to, my family. All that they gave me was a part of the letter with only the words, "Dear father, ..." When I was arrested I left a pregnant wife and five young daughters. My wife gave birth to a new daughter whom I didn't see till she was in the third elementary class (about eight years old). The first time my children visited me I couldn't recognize them. Once, during the visiting period, I stood behind the iron barred window seeing how other prisoners were happily talking to their closest relatives. I saw some children running behind the bars. Then they came peeping through the bars as if looking for somebody. I asked them who they were looking for. "We are looking for our father," they said. "But what is your father's name?" I asked. I was shocked to hear them say "Abdel Rahim Jaber!" Believe me tears fell from my eyes as I said, "I am Abdel Rahim Jaber. I am your father!" The children were surprised and bewildered, not believing what they had heard. Then my father came and told them, "This is your father." They put their fingers through the iron bars and I kissed them. I couldn't help shedding tears of sorrow when they began to shout: "Papa, come out. We want to kiss you."

STRUGGLE

We were aware that we were in the enemy's hands and we had to shoulder our responsibilities. We began to organize our ranks and decided on certain measu-

res to confront the problems facing us.

We declared a hunger strike and formed a committee to deal with the strike and strikers' affairs. The committee handed the prison authorities a list of our demands which included intellectual, health, treatment and nutrition demands. We demanded books and reading and study facilities; we demanded treatment for those who were sick and surgery for those needing it. They ignored us for some 4 or 5 days. Then they began to interrogate us separately. When we persisted in the strike, they force-fed us through plastic tubes stuck through the mouth to the stomach.

The authorities pretended to agree to our demands. But one month later, When we realized that we had been deceived, we resumed the hunger strike. Though some demands were met, the necessary things were delayed.

In 1973, we declared another strike. We refused to receive visitors, to accept medicine from the prison authorities, to go out during the breaks and to shave or bathe. The authorities remained passive for about a month. Then they started arguing with us. During the argument the director pushed a blind prisoner, Mahmoud Abu Danhash, violently onto the floor. The director's violence towards our blind comrade provoked a reprisal from us. We attacked the director and his assistant, causing a big unit of the police to come in and attack us with gas and rifle butts. About 100 of us were hurt. Some received head wounds and had their limbs broken. We were driven to the cells and deprived of our belongings and beds.

ANOTHER STRIKE

However, we didn't expect our enemy to be gene-

rous or humane to us. By 1976, we had matured and resorted to a hunger strike once again. After the first ten days, some of us broke down, mainly those who were ill. The authorities resorted to the old tactic of force feeding the strikers. I lost two teeth while they were forcing open my mouth with the wooden pincers. Others vomited blood after pulling the plastic pipe out of their stomachs. The strike lasted for 45 consecutive days. After that, Haiem Halivi, general director of the prisons, and Jesterfield, director of our prison, came to talk to us. The committee met them and presented to them our demands. We wanted to be considered prisoners of war and we wanted a redress of our previously mentioned grievances. They promised to meet our demands. The strike was resumed a month later when we realized that we had been deceived. The new strike lasted for 22 days. Though on the material level the strikes did not achieve very much, there were moral and political gains. Moreover, through the strike, we tested our will, which proved to be stronger than our oppressors. For we no more were to say "master" to the jailers, nor to have our hands behind our backs while walking during the daily break. We achieved some freedom. We were allowed visits by other relatives in addition to parents, wives and children.

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

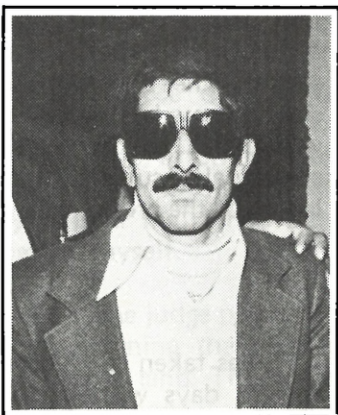
I want to point out that most of us were offered short sentences if we submitted a plea for mercy. Even those with very long terms were to benefit from this. All of us refused the offer. Why? Because to plea to our enemy for mercy would have been a betrayal of our national principles and humiliating besides. We had consciously and deliberately chosen the path of revolution. Revolution is not a picnic.

ARAB PALESTINE TO LIVE

The news of our release was received as happily by our comrades staying behind as by us. When we bade them farewell, their eyes shed the tears of sincere happiness. In spite of the beatings they would suffer, they shouted to us as we left: "Down with Israel. Long live Arab Palestine "

**MAHMOUD
ABU DANHASH:**

**BORN: 1948
ARRESTED: 1969**



I was arrested after being injured in a battle with enemy soldiers in Halhoul area. I was hunted till I was surrounded by the enemy on all sides. There was a battalion of them. I decided to fight to the last and there the battle began. My place was fortified with rocks. The battle continued for a considerable time, until my hand grenades run out and I was left with a few bullets. I stopped shooting. The soldiers thought I had been killed, but nevertheless a group of them drew near, telling me, through a loudspeaker, to surrender, just in case I was still alive. But no sooner had they come within range, than I reopened fire. The shooting resumed till I had completely run out of ammunition. At that moment, I noticed the serious wounds I had received, the worst of which was a shrapnel in the right eye, which became blind. When I found I had nothing left to fight with, I destroyed my rifle by striking it on the rocks, so the enemy would not benefit from it.

I stayed where I was until they came and seized me. From the moment, the beatings started, with

fists, legs and rifle butts. An enemy officer took his pistol and hit me on the upper part of my left eye socket. The bone was broken and I eventually lost sight in my left eye as well. The result of the battle was that I had received about 25 injuries, but the enemy also suffered casualties, including Dogh, the leader of the group, who was killed in the battle.

DETAINED

I was taken to Hebron prison where I was left for several days without receiving any serious medical treatment. This was their response to my refusal to give them informations about the other commandos I was in action with. The interrogator asked me, "Why did you come here?" My answer was, "I came to fight and destroy your illegal entity and liberate my land." To that he slapped me on the face. Of course, being blind, I could not anticipate the blow. Yangho, the director of the prison, was very brutal. He and his assistant jailers formed a gang whose favourite hobby was to humiliate and torture the prisoners. Soon I was transferred to the Ramle Central Prison for more interrogation. The interrogations finally ended in Beersheba Prison.

After someone is arrested, he is usually visited by the International Red Cross representatives. But for the first six months, I was prevented for meeting them. When I.R.C. representatives came to the prison, the jailers concealed me with some others in a certain cell till the Red Cross left. I was also prevented from receiving any visits from my relatives.

TRIAL

I was taken back to Hebron prison for my trial.

The trial was superficial. They say that they appoint an attorney to defend the person arrested, but he is usually a secret police officer whose duty is to extract more information from the prisoner to make his situation worse. I refused the attorney they appointed, and demanded the right to appoint an attorney who would really defend me. When they refused I said that I could defend myself.

At another session of the trial, the judge prevented me from expressing myself concerning their illegal entity and our right to live on our land. The police guard hit me on the nose where the bone was already broken. This was in compliance with the judge's orders, and was done in presence of a representative of the International Red Cross. Then I told the court, "Why are you trying me then, if you aren't going to let me express myself? Give me the sentence you want."

In fact this is what usually happens with most of the prisoners. Their sentences are sent to them in prison through the prison director, without their having appeared before a court. Sometimes the prisoners would be called to the director of the prison, who would read each prisoner's sentence.

IN ASHKELON PRISON

I spent seven years there. The conditions were very bad. The treatment was very humiliating. Yet, they wanted us to work in the prison workshops and be productive. They fiercely punished those who refused to work. Once, Omar Shalabi, one of the prisoners, refused to work. The jailors began beating him until he complied with their demand. But when he went to work he broke an electric iron. The jailer took him to Jesterfield, director of the prison, who started beating

him on the head till he lost consciousness. He was taken to hospital where he died some days later.

This is but one example of the violation of human rights there. Instead of trying Jesterfield and his gang in Ashkelon prison, the Zionist authorities rewarded them by giving them promotions.

HUNGER STRIKE

So we declared a hunger strike on 11 December 1976. Our demands were that wounded and disabled prisoners be released. I was one of those named to be released. Another disabled prisoner had his legs amputated. A third one was suffering from a severe fever due to which he was almost mentally disturbed. Other demands were the improvement of the conditions and treatment in the prison, and that the murderers of Omar Shalabi be tried.

The prison authorities made improvements in our treatment conditional on our work and the production in the prison workshops. We rejected this. We were about 500 prisoners. Though we belonged to the different Palestinian organizations, we were united and well organized. There was a "Coordination Committee" authorized by us to talk to the prison authorities about the different matters which came up.

The hunger strike lasted for 45 days. On the 9th day, some of us broke down when the authorities managed to force-feed us with a cup of milk by means of a plastic pipe drawn through the nose to the stomach. On the 20th day, they moved some prisoners to other prisons, thinking that they were the leaders of the strike and that upon their departure everything would go back to normal. On the 30th day

they moved another group. Yet, in spite of this, all the strikers, even those moved to other prisons, continued the hunger strike, which finally ended on 24 January 1977 on the committee's orders. Yet the strike was resumed a month later, on 24 February 1977, when the director of prisons broke the promises he had made in order to end the original hunger strike. This new strike lasted for more than 20 days until some of our demands were met.

Zionist and foreign pressmen used to visit us in the prison. The director of the prison would call a prisoner to talk to them. If he or his assistant were not satisfied with what the prisoner said to the journalists, the prisoner would be beaten and put in an isolation cell for several days.

RELEASE

When I was released I was in Beersheba prison. A jailer came and called my name and that of three others in the room. He told us to go to the store room of the prison to take our belongings and return the clothes we were wearing, for they were prison property. We were taken in a car belonging to the military police, not the prison police as we were accustomed to, when being moved from one prison to another. At the gate of the prison we were transferred to a bus. This was also strange, for the first time since our imprisonment we were riding a bus. Our hands and legs were tied. This was about 8:30 at night. On the way we heard the soldiers in the bus talking about beating us, but an officer told them not to do so because the International Red Cross was going to check us.

The bus parked in an area we didn't know. We remained there for about 90 minutes before we got

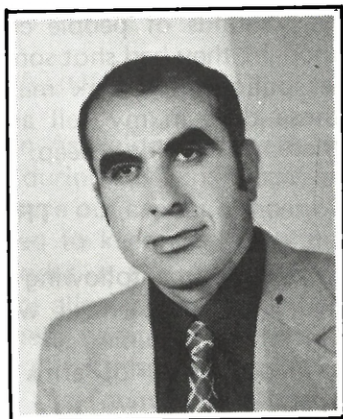
off the bus. After that a representative of the I.R.C. came and told us in English that we were going to be exchanged for the Israeli prisoner, Avraham. He warned us against any reaction if the Israeli soldiers mistreated us, saying that they might take it as an excuse to delay some of us.

After four days of waiting, we were put into a bus. Meanwhile, they would beat us on the head, the back, and the extremities. The bus drove to an airport. Even there, we were not spared fierce treatment. In the plane, our hands and legs were tied to the chairs and our eyes blindfolded. Even I, a blind man, wore a blindfold.

When the plane landed in Geneva, the Israelis began manoeuvring and tried to delay some of us. I heard one speaking in Hebrew to his colleague, "Omar (one of the released prisoners) zein sha'ar", i.e. "Omar will remain here."

**KHALID
ABDEL RAHIM ALI**

**BORN: 1945
ARRESTED: 1967**



After the June war of 1967, I was sent with other militants on a reconnaissance and training mission in the West Bank. We travelled several times between Jordan and the West Bank, taking advantage of the travel policy of the occupation authorities which aimed at emptying the occupied territories of their population. On 18 December, we were arrested while we were on our way to Jordan.

TORTURE

I was taken to Sarafand prison which I can call a torture compound. For 22 days, I was put in 125 x 75 cms. cell in which I had my meals, slept and which I was forced to use as a toilet. They took me each day to a room and hung me up on its roof with my hands and legs chained. I was beaten with sticks, lashes and rubber pipes continuously for four hours. This was only interrupted by pouring hot and cold water on me whenever I got faint.

At night they would fire guns outside my cell and

play sounds of people crying and sighing so that I thought they had shot somebody. They threatened to let policedogs attack me. In fact, they let one of those dogs in my cell and left it the whole night there, so I couldn't sleep.

TRIAL

Six months following my arrest, I was taken to court in Toulkarm. I was charged with being an "infiltrator", joining an "illegal" organization, "illegal" possession of arms and carrying out military operations.

In reality, I was not arrested in a direct battle with their forces. The charge of "military operations" is directed against any arrested militant. Explosions and military operations in which they fail to detect those responsible would be attributed to any newly arrested militant. This happens to such an extent that some militants were charged with operations the responsibility of which were already confessed by other militants. At the end of the trial, I was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment. After the trial, I was taken to Ramle prison. I spent a few months there after which I was transferred to Beit Leed prison. At the end I was settled in Ashkelon prison. This was on 10 February 1969.

ASHKELON PRISON

This prison was built by the Zionist authorities to contain the militants coming from outside the occupied territories. The procedure followed there is that each new resident would be put in a solitary cell for 15 continuous days. In the meantime, he would be beaten three times a day, once before each meal. After this "reception" he would be taken to join the

other militants in the prison.

HUMILIATION

The treatment I found in Ashkelon prison was no better than that I met during the interrogation period. We were forced to have our caps and shoes on for 16 hours a day. We had to keep sitting on the floor with our legs bent under us and our blankets strapped in front of us, not allowed to use them till 9:00 P.M. These four blankets, worn out and of bad quality, were to be used as a mattress, a cover and a cushion. Our movement in the room was restricted. Talking together in the room was considered a violation of the prison regulations. All had to sleep at 9:00 P.M. when the light was put off. This humiliating treatment was a systematic policy. Even in the daily half an hour break, we had to walk in twos, with our heads bent down. One had to say "Master" to the jailer before the jailer would speak to him. Medical care and nutrition situation were no better.

HUNGER STRIKES

In May 1970, we went on a hunger strike. Our demands were:

1. Ending the jailers' humiliating treatment.
2. Our right to use the blankets and talk together in the rooms.
3. To be allowed to receive fruits from our relatives and the meals to be improved.
4. Ending collective punishment and imprisonment in the solitary cells.
5. To have a sponge and soap for bathing.
6. To have beds.

7. To be supplied with a list of rights and liabilities for the prisoners.
..... etc.

On the 8th. day, the prison authorities managed to force-feed us. I, for instance, was force-fed by stretching a plastic tube through my nose to my stomach. This process lasted about 15 minutes during which they moved the tube violently up and down. In short, the strike was brutally suppressed.

In 1973, we went on another strike. We refused to go out during the daily break or meet our relatives during the visits so that they would raise our complaints to the media. We stopped taking baths, shaving or washing our faces and clothes. The prisoners smelt very nasty and the jailers couldn't enter our rooms to give their orders. At last, they met some of our demands such as lifting the metal plates separating the rooms. The daily break became 60 minutes instead of 30 minutes. They began to allow our relatives to bring us new underclothing and we were permitted to listen to the news, though to the Israeli broadcast in Arabic only. Al-Anba'a newspaper was also allowed to the prison, since it was controlled by the Israeli intelligence. However, the eruption of the October war of 1973 between the Arabs and Israel was the main factor for us to end the strike. We realized that the public was prepared to follow the development of the war more than our strike.

In 1975, we had a third strike to put an end to the oppressive and humiliating practices. However, we put our demands into action: No more saying "Master" to the jailer. No more walking in twos with heads bent down during the breaks. We were beaten and put in the solitary cells. But we insisted on the demands and they became our normal actions.

On 11 December 1976, we went on the famous strike that lasted 67 days. Our demands included medical treatment for those who needed it and the right of collective representation. They wanted to punish us collectively, but anyone who would speak of the prisoners as a whole was punished. It was a conflict of will between us and them. They had a proverb that they used to say, "If I extend my finger to you you would pull off the whole of my hand."

CONDITIONAL IMPROVEMENT

The prison authorities expressed their "readiness" to improve our conditions if we agreed to work: "Work and your conditions will be improved."

We refused the offer on the basis that Geneva Agreement reads that prisoners are allowed to work on condition that the revenue of their work would be returned to them and that the conditions in the places of work should be different from those in the prisoner's rooms. Both conditions were not available to us.

MEDIATION, THREAT, AND DEPORTATION

In spite of the beating and torture, we continued our strike. During that time, (Rashad) Al-Shawwa, Mayor of Gaza, visited us to mediate an end to the strike. He failed to achieve anything. The next day we were visited by a Knesset member who said: "Your strike is a political one and had nothing to do with living conditions. Outside the prison you threw real bombs. Now you are throwing political bombs inside it."

After that 40 strikers, including myself, were deported to Beit leed prison. On the 45th. day of the

strike, Haiem Halivi, Director of the prisons, came and promised to meet our demands if we end the strike. We were returned back to Ashkelon prison where we all agreed to end the hunger strike.

FALSE PROMISE

A week later, Halivi came to the prison and looked at us with an openly deceitful and sarcastic smile, as if he had meant to say, "I fooled you". In consequence we decided to resume the hunger strike. It was resumed on 24 February 1977.

The authorities responded by practising the same brutal methods in beating and force-feeding us. They took some of us, including myself, on a "disciplinary mission" to Jalami prison. More varieties of brutal treatment were waiting for us there. After 22 days of this new strike, they fulfilled some of our demands. We were supplied with sponge mattresses 5 cms. thick; the daily break became two hours; and we were supplied with the daily English Jerusalem Post.

However, the rights that we realized by our suffering and difficult strikes were liable to cancellation whenever the prison authorities disapproved our "misbehaviour".

"C" CATEGORY

The Zionist authorities classify the prisoners in "A", "B" and "C" categories. The first includes the ordinary citizens; the second includes the criminals and those who belong to the underworld in their society; the third includes the Palestinian militants. Jesterfied, the director of the prison, always treated us in this last category. We used to say to him, "Give us the rights your 'state' gives to the criminals of your

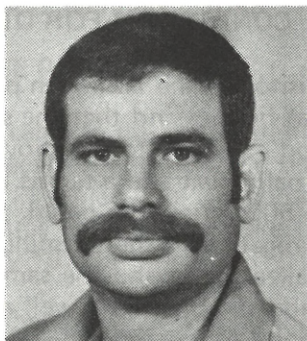
society.” But in his treatment to us, he never tried to deal with us outside his view of us as enemies. He deliberately manifested his hatred towards us.

CONDITIONS FOR DISPLAY ONLY

A visitor to the Ashkelon prison will be fascinated by what he sees and that the situation is supposed to be good. The visitor is shown a basketball court, volley ball court and a tennis table. But to think how about 500 prisoners could possibly practise such sports together in the 30 minutes daily break, makes one realize the truth. The same with the library; it is clean and the books are well arranged. But where are the books to read? In recent years, some political and philosophical books were brought; of course, due to our struggle. The clinic in the prison is not an exception. You can see large quantities of medicine arranged on the shelves. But the medicines given to the patients were only tranquillizers, aspirin, and valium. The pharmacists there wore white costumes on the outside, but had black hearts inside.

KAMAL NAMMARY

BORN: 1942
ARRESTED: 1968



My political life started when I was a schoolboy in the late 1950s. In 1965, I graduated as a civil engineer from Cairo University and returned to Jordan. In 1966, I was imprisoned by the Jordanian authorities for four months.

After the June War in 1967, our duty was to distribute pamphlets to urge the masses not to leave their houses and land and to confront the occupiers by all means. We succeeded in building a broad political front including all the national forces in the occupied territories. After that, we began the armed resistance against the occupation forces, using whatever light weapons we could secure.

ARREST

Until my arrest on 3 March 1968, I took part in several military operations. Another militant, William Nassar, was also arrested for the same charge.

From the very moment of my arrest, the beating

started. I was blindfolded, tied and taken to Sarafand prison. I was punched and kicked in the stomach and everywhere else on my body. They put me in a cell, one meter by one meter in dimension. For four consecutive days, I was prevented from sleep and subjected to beating.

INTERROGATION

I was charged with being a commando leader in the West Bank. They wanted me to give them information about commando bases in Al-Karameh (on the eastern bank of the River Jordan, attacked by Israel on 21 March 1968) and in the occupied territories. In spite of the brutal torture, I didn't give any information. I was under both physical and psychological torture. From my room, I could hear recordings of the cries of other militants being tortured.

There were two interrogators who adopted different roles, one beating me and the other promising me things if I talked. They threatened to blow up my house if I didn't speak. In fact, they did it. Due to continuous torture, my hand was paralyzed. I began a hunger strike. After seven days, they tried to negotiate with me. They tried to get me to call on the Arabs to stop fighting and negotiate a peace with "Israel" but I refused. I insisted that what I wanted was medical treatment.

TRIAL

On 6 May, I was taken to court. William was also there. Each session of the trial lasted for five days. We rejected the trial and the lawyer assigned by the court. We refused to stand for the judges as they passed before us. The policemen beat us while we were in the cages. During the trial, we refused to talk

as an expression of our non-recognition of the lawfulness of the court.

THREE RELIGIONS

The Zionists used to assume that the Palestinian militants were a "handful of mercenaries and outcasts." The torture we had been under was meant to make us give in and politically breakdown so that they would show us to the world public as such. Concerning our case, they found themselves with a political problem that refuted all their allegations. I am a civil engineer and William was a university student in Spain. I am a Muslim and he is a Christian. Most critical to them was the fact that both our mothers are Jews. Three religions have been in struggle for the same cause. My mother died one year after my arrest. She refused to talk to the authorities in order to reduce my sentence, even though her brother was a leading Zionist. He is Avraham Kidron, the present Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

RAMLE PRISON

After trial we were taken to Ramle prison. The treatment was very bad: beating and insults. We began to organize ourselves and struggle to achieve some of our human rights. We began to provoke the other militants against work in the prison that benefits the enemy, mainly work for the army.

William Nassar, Hafez Kassim, Imad Oukal, Abdel Hamid Hamdan and myself, were taken to Ashkelon prison on a "disciplinary mission." For twenty days we were under continuous beating and torture. This was carried out by some thirty policemen. Consequently, William tried to commit suicide. After this

attempt by William, they returned us to Ramle prison.

DIVIDE AND OPPRESS POLICY

The prison authorities didn't spare any means to divide our ranks and make us suspicious of each other. But all of us were aware of those intrigues. We were aware of one enemy who is the enemy of all of us and who uses one language, that of torture, to speak to us all. The intelligence officer would call one of us to his office and ask him, for instance, about the political situation. Of course, this would go on in an attempt by the Zionist officer to make him politically distorted. He would say, "There are some riot provokers in the prison. Avoid them. We are going to transfer them to another prison. In the coming months we are going to release some 'good charactered' prisoners. So, don't participate in any strike."

Such rumours were detected from the first moment. Anyone who wanted to tell about anything he had heard, had to tell the source. Anyone who had met the enemy, had to tell in details what argument took place. This became a common practice by all the militants. They were aware of their duty and responsibility.

NATIONAL UNITY

The enemy didn't differentiate between one militant and another. All were liable to the same oppression and humiliation. So we concluded a framework for national unity. We formed what we called the "Coordination Committee". Every Palestinian organization present at the prison was represented by an equal number of members. The decisions taken by the committee were the product of the opinions of

all. Each one had the right to argue about each point. This democratic atmosphere gave us a momentum to go on long-period strikes. The unity and oneness among the prisoners was very strong. It is the reflection of the true national unity. If one got, for example, an orange, he would share it with his fellow militants, however small each share might be. If one feels ill, all others would take care of him.

I would proudly say that the militants in the prisons reached splendid political level. We imposed our respect on our jailers. Now he who would beat a prisoner would be beaten. The prison authorities would manage to transfer him to another place so that we would never see him again.

We used to teach all the educational subjects starting from erasing illiteracy up to the General Secondary Education level. There were classes for advanced studies. I used to teach advanced mathematics. Political education was not forgotten. It was in two parts:

1. National Political Education. This included the history of the Palestinian problem and our people's struggle. Though we got our information from Zionist sources, we were capable of pointing out the distorted historical facts and teaching the true ones. We used to translate even the Hebrew sources.

2. Marxist Education. In the last 5 years, our struggle enabled us to have the works of Lenin, Marx, Engels and Mao Tse Tung.

We got the books and stationery through the education officer, I.R.C. and our families. We were allowed to receive one book a month. We tried to get every book published in the West Bank and Gaza

through the library of the Israeli Communist Party, Rakah.

The educational trend in the prison was very active. Each militant had three programs: an educational program, a political program, and a sport program. He would have a yearly evaluation concerning these programs.

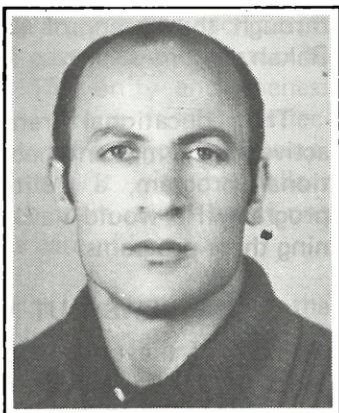
JEWS, BUT NOT ZIONISTS

Most of the prisoners in Ramle prison were militants of the Palestinian revolution. The others were ordinary civilians. I would classify the Jewish prisoners into two groups. Those who belonged to democratic groups, the best of whom were those who belonged to the Red Front and the others who, to a large extent, belonged to the underworld of the Zionist society. With respect to the Red Front members, they were excellent comrades, of splendid revolutionary character. I was fascinated with their morale and their enthusiasm in defence of the Palestinian revolution. Of course we had some differences with them, but not concerning Zionism. Our differences were purely ideological. All in all, I respect them very much.

Concerning those of the underworld, the prison authorities imposed them on us and planted them in our rooms to exploit them and use them as spies on us. We asked the authorities to replace them by security prisoners, but they refused. However, we made them respect us and behave the way we wanted. They were poor and miserable people. We used to give them tea, blankets, cigarettes, ... etc. Most of them were oriental Jews. There were an Iraqi group among them whom we called the "Iraqi Front". They used to say, "We are Arabs. We want to work with you".

NAWAF AL-ZARROW

BORN: 1950
ARRESTED: 1968



After the occupation of the West-Bank and Gaza, in June war 1967, it was natural that the people would carry arms and resist occupation. However, within that part of Palestine occupied in 1948, there has been resistance since the Zionists took over, though at a comparatively low level. So to fulfil this duty, some comrades and myself joined the armed struggle in early 1968.

Our first big operation was the "Night of Bombs", on August 18, 1968, in Jerusalem, when 5 explosions occurred at the same time in different districts of the city.

The operation was executed for specific reasons. First it was meant to refute the enemy's allegations that stability had been restored to the city after its so called "re-unification". It was also a response to the enemy's allegations that the Arabs of the city were living in "harmony" with their occupiers, and the whole city was "restored to order". Second, it was meant as a warning against the efforts of the UN emmissary,

Gunnar Jarrings, who was then mediating between Israel and the Arab regimes for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in complete ignorance of the core of the conflict: Palestinian rights. The message of our operation was that no one can ignore the Palestinian people's rights and presence. We are the owners of the cause and the only ones entitled to speak on our behalf. The bombs were our answer to the capitulationist solutions.

This operation was followed by the "Night of Horror" operation in Tel-Aviv, on 4 September, after which our group was discovered by the enemy. Except for one comrade and me, all of our group were arrested. We two managed to escape to our hideout. But after an operation against the enemy soldiers in Hebron, our hideout was detected, and we were both arrested when the whole area was filled with soldiers and with helicopters flying above.

ARREST

I say with sorrow that we couldn't resist. Our arms were hidden in another place. Beating and torture started from the moment of our arrest. The soldiers hit us with the butts of their guns, kicked us with their legs and punched us with their fists.

Then we were taken by helicopter to Hebron prison. The interrogation there was supervised by the army's intelligence service, who brought in strong and able-bodied men to interrogate us. Of course, they were well trained for the job with all the experience methods of torture, physical and psychological.

PHYSICAL TORTURE

They cruelly punched our faces and severely hit us

on sensitive parts of the body. They kicked our faces with their boots and extinguished cigarettes on our bodies, especially on the nipples and under the arms. We could not move our arms because the burnt skin was irritated and caused pain. Nor could we even sleep. Worse was that they tried to emasculate me. They hit me very harshly and cruelly on my genitals. This process was repeated several times so that I became numb to it.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE

When the physical torture failed to make me give information, they resorted to psychological torture.

Once, after being beaten by soldiers and officers, about 20 people surrounded me. Some of them began asking questions in a hurried way leaving me no time for concentration to give an answer, while some others were laughing loudly and hysterically. Still others began loading their weapons and threatened to kill me. This took place in a dark room which helped to create a horrible atmosphere.

Another method of psychological torture was to threaten to detain our relatives, especially our sisters. They threatened to bring my sisters and rape them if I didn't confess. My sisters and young brother were detained in the Maskobeya prison (Russian Compound) in Jerusalem and were severely tortured. My brother was charged with being a member of my group and with participation in military operations. My sisters were released after three days of detainment, during which they were humiliated, insulted and beaten.

INTERROGATION

The interrogators' question centered on the organi-

zation I belonged to, my comrades who were still free, the weapons in our possession and where they were hidden. The main concern of the interrogators was Abu Mansour, a leading militant in the struggle against the Zionist occupation. He was being hunted by the Zionist forces in the Hebron area. He had replaced Abdel Rahim Jaber who was arrested in Wadi/Araba after a fierce clash with the Zionist forces. The interrogators would tell me, "We don't want you to confess to your participation in the operations. We have evidences for that already. We want you to direct us to Abu Mansour's hideout, and to tell us with whom he makes contact and the places in which he shows up."

Of course I didn't have such information about Abu Mansour, because I didn't know him personally. This interrogation lasted for more than a month. When I denied knowing this information, I was tortured as before.

After that came the detention period. Two months later, I was taken with other fellow militants to trial.

TRIAL

The trial had seven sessions during which my comrades and myself were brought before the court. The trial was a farcial one. But we changed it into a political forum to express our political opinions, and there was a kind of political duel between us and the Zionist judges.

It was not a fair trial. The judge, the prosecutor-general and the lawyer all had their orders, and acted in accordance with instructions given to them by the Zionist intelligence service. We realized the trial was a sham and hence we totally rejected it. Of course, in

principle we reject the very existence of the Zionist enemy, so, how are we going to recognize the legitimacy of its courts, judges and lawyers? As I have said, we transformed the court into a political forum to express our political stand. In spite of their attempts to prevent us from talking about politics, we spoke out strongly about our national cause, which was the reason we were in their in their prisons and courts. The Zionist soldiers, acting on the judges' orders, would beat us and cruelly bring us back to the docks. Our reaction was to sing national songs about Palestine and the revolution. This took place in the presence of foreign and local reporters, as well as our families and relatives who attended the trial. On 9 February 1969, the trial ended with each of us being given a life sentence.

After that we were taken to Ramle prison, which the Zionist authorities considered the suitable place for us, since we were considered "Israeli subjects" following the farce of the "re-unification" of Jerusalem. Of course we protested this reasoning, for we did not, and do not, recognize the Zionist "re-unification" of the city.

STRUGGLE

In fact, the natural response to hear a life sentence read to you is to be bitterly shocked. But our belief that the Zionist occupation and the Zionist entity itself would not outlive us gave us the strength to begin a new stage of struggle. Our first concern was to keep our morale high and steadfast for the survival of our political identity and revolutionary consciousness. In this context, the struggle inside the prison was considered an extension of the struggle outside. This had become the dominant feeling of the mili-

tants in the prison and constituted the basis for our relations with the prison authorities.

EDUCATION

The last thing we expect is for our enemy to look after our educational and health needs.. The enemy's deliberate policy in prisons is to turn the militants there into reserve manpower for his economy, and to turn them into such a desperate group that those who complete their sentences will leave the prisons with a large gap between them and their community outside. In view of this our concern was to raise our educational and cultural levels to preserve our spirit and political consciousness.

But basic education tools — books, copybooks, pencils — were not available and our requests for them were persistently denied. After 6 years of struggle — through hunger strikes, sit-ins, and pressure on the I.R.C. — they became available. I can say that now there are about 1000 books in the library of Ramle prison.

On this level of struggle, we managed to raise our educational level and obliterate illiteracy — for we happened to have some illiterate militants among us. We ran classes for general education and for specific subjects such as history, philosophy, sciences and foreign languages: English, French and Hebrew. Due to our efforts, I can estimate that 90% of our fellow militants who are still in the prison got the G.C.E. (General Certificate of Education) level.

I can say with great pride that we were capable of foiling the enemy's attempts to transform us into a detached, hopeless community. The great educational capacities there are exploited in the process of rebuild-

ding the jailed militants and keeping them to re-shoulder their responsibilities in confronting their jailers in the prison, and to be dedicated cadres to their people and cause when they are released.

A TIGHT UNITY

No less essential was to close the ranks in the prison to confront the prison authorities. It is true that we belonged to different organizations, but the aim of our organizations is one. For this we were a national front to confront the Zionist attempts to empty us of our national content and to exploit any differences between one organization and another. We had unified stands in the hunger strikes and sit-ins held concerning our demands. Within the framework of the "national front", each organization preserved its own ideological programs forward for its cadres. Yet each organization was represented in a central leadership of the prison called the "COORDINATION COMMITTEE", to look after the prisoners' affairs. The Coordination Committee was the spokesman of the prisoners, and its decisions must be implemented by all.

STRUGGLE AGAINST WORK IN ZIONIST FACTORIES

Our section in the prison was a limited crowded one. It consisted of eight rooms for about 150 prisoners.. Now there are about 75 prisoners there.

During the first two years of our imprisonment, we were forced to work. Whenever there would be a new resident, the prison director would call him to his office and give him the instructions concerning "how to behave" in the prison, mainly to accept work, or he would be put in the isolation cell. In fact,

those who refused work were put in the isolation cell for no less than two weeks, sometimes for a whole month. There they were blindfolded, their hands and legs tied, and they were cruelly beaten. Others were stripped and left nude, before trained police dogs, which attacked them. This was a common practice of the prison authorities. In the prison of Ashkelon, for instance, this was done against Ahmad Khalifa who now lives in Amman after his release, Kamal Nammari (liberated with us), and William Nassar who was transferred to Ashkelon prison in a "disciplinary mission" (now in Ramle prison).

The working conditions were materially and psychologically difficult. We were compelled to make nets for the tanks and clothes for the soldiers. How could we agree to do such things? In spite of the cruel beating and torture, we refused to work in these factories. Our refusal was expressed in hunger strikes and sit-ins till we succeeded in putting an end to this work after two years of struggle.

The kind of work we agreed to do was that whose outcome would reflect positively on us. For example, to work in the kitchen, to wash our clothes, or anything else for the prisoners' welfare. A year before our release, the Zionist authorities built new factories related to the prison with improved conditions. Since they were meant to support the Zionist economy, we refused to work in them and the prison authorities failed to make us comply.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Living conditions in Israeli prisons are very bad and a person's humanity is humiliated. The Zionist policy is a policy of oppression, derived from the Zionist concept of superiority and the "chosen

people" complex. All in all, they managed to intimidate and suppress our revolutionary spirit to make us give in and the timid, obedient servants. One can't imagine 30 people sharing a room, which has space for no more than ten persons in the best conditions. We used to sleep in very close rows, so we couldn't avoid trodding on another fellow's back if one tried to go to the toilet. Most of us slept on the floor with nothing under us, for few mattresses were provided.

As for food, both its quality and quantity were insufficient. Fruits were rarely served, and when they were, they were few and of the poor quality. These used to be brought from the unmarketed surplus at the Israeli fruit company, "Compa". Vegetables, such as green beans, potatoes, tomatoes,...etc., were rare. As for the meat, it was a 30 gram ration for each. The meat was lousy and you felt like throwing it away.

MEDICAL CARE

As for the medical treatment, it wasn't an exception to the entire deliberate Zionist policy of destroying us morally and physically. Several wounded militants were left bleeding for a long time or left without medical treatment till their wounds worsened and complications set in.

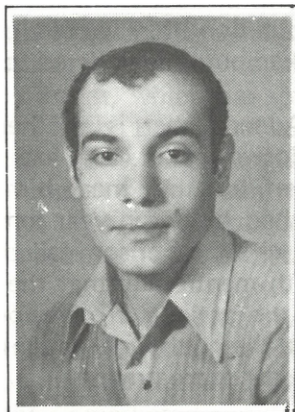
Hafez Dalkamouni is but one example. His leg could have been saved had he received the correct treatment in time. After being mishandled and neglected for a long time, the "concerned medical authorities" decided his leg should be cut off under the pretext that it was infected with gangrene which would spread. So, they concluded that his leg had to be cut from the upper part of the thigh bone. Dalkamouni argued that his injury was slight and he needed treatment not amputation. They said that without

amputation they would give him no treatment, so Dalkamouni surrendered to their decision.

Adnan Jaber is another. His leg was shot by an explosive bullet. He had two "operations" in the prison, but they made him no better. Though he had finished his seven year sentence, the "treatment" he was given in prison failed to cure his wound. It is worth mentioning that the Zionist authorities prevented the patients from choosing which physicians to treat them, though patients' relatives offered to pay the cost of treatment.

GHASSAN KAMAL

BORN: 1949
ARRESTED: 1968



I was recruited in the Palestinian revolution in 1968. With other militants of my unit, we carried out several successful operations in the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv areas. I was arrested only several minutes after the early explosion of a bomb I had planted, due to a defect in its timing device. I was taken to Abu Kbeir prison near Tel Aviv. After that, my home was thoroughly searched, where the Zionist soldiers found material evidence which pointed to my participation. This evidence was no less dangerous in exposing some militants of my unit.

INTERROGATION

The captured evidence made it impossible for me and the other militants to ignore the charges of commitment to the Palestinian revolution. But the interrogators practised all the means of torture against us, so we would give them more details and information. I was hit with fists on the face, stomach and all other parts of the body. Most painful were the kicks on the stomach, the back and the genitals. This

lasted for 36 days during which I was under the threat of being shot dead if I did not give the names of other militants or the hiding places of our weapons.

The interrogation occurred at no regular time. It could be late in the night or early in the morning. After that I was taken to Damoun prison where I was detained for 45 days. During this period, the same methods of interrogation were resumed till we were taken to trial.

TRIAL

On the day of trial, I was taken with my fellow militants of the same unit to the court. At the beginning we refused to go because the result of the "trial" was already known. We knew, from other militants' experiences, that we were only to be taken to listen to the already decided sentences.

They tried to impose their lawyers on us to "defend" us. Being prevented from appointing our own lawyers, we refused their lawyers and insisted on defending ourselves. We took the opportunity to defend the cause for which we carried arms and resorted to violence. The court was transferred into a political forum. We exposed the inhuman and brutal treatment we had met during the investigation. All this was before television crews and journalists who were there. The judge ordered the soldiers who were there to shut us up. So, we were violently driven out of the court. Meanwhile, the judge gave us all life sentences. He was outraged most when one of us asked him, "How can the victim be tried by the robber? "

RAMLE PRISON

After the trial we were taken to Ramle prison. For the first three weeks we were kept in solitary cells with our hands and legs tied. Even during the daily 30 minute break, we had chains on our hands and legs. We were told that this measure was a punishment for our "misbehaviour" in the court.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Contrary to what was expected, beating and inhuman treatment were no less unbearable in the prison. Medical care and food supplies were worse. Humiliation and insults were the daily policy practised by the jailers. So, as freedom fighters who had carried arms to liberate their country and restore their people's dignity, we did not give in, even though we were in prison. We preserved our revolutionary spirit and considered ourselves a relatively active extension of our revolutionary community outside. We resorted to all possible means of struggle in an attempt to achieve some of our human rights and to put an end to the brutal Zionist practices against us. Decent treatment was our main concern, even more than health and nutrition considerations. However, we were aware of the fact that the Zionist entity, being based on our usurped land, can deprive us of everything, even the air we breathe.

STRUGGLE

By different means of struggle, hunger strikes, sit-ins, and letters of protests against the prison authorities' behaviour, we were able to achieve some improvement in the conditions of life in prison.

On the cultural level, books became available. The

level of education we attained was relatively good for people in the prisons of an enemy. We would teach ourselves various subjects and languages. Thanks to the efforts of other fellow militants, we were taught English, French and Hebrew. I, myself, now know these three languages.

On the medical care level, the matter was different. For, of course, we didn't have the medical training to look after ourselves and improve our health conditions in the same way we had done on the cultural level. All that we had received from the authorities were the promises. Medical conditions in the Zionist prisons are still very bad. Tranquillizers are the usual medicines prescribed for the Palestinian militants by the Zionist physicians and pharmacists. If one suffers from an ailment which needs surgery, he might suffer to death before being able to have the operation. He has to register his name in the files of the prison director and wait for a considerable period of time to be checked by a physician. If a physician confirms that he needs surgery, the patient has to wait for no less than two years to be hospitalized for the surgical operation. It is evident that this deliberate delay is meant to worsen the patient's condition and reduce the possibility of his recovery. It is also a determined policy by the Zionist authorities to make the jailed militants suffer as much as possible and die a slow death. This Zionist sadism was expressed by the director of the prison, who said, "I don't approve the death sentence for them (the Palestinian militants). Let them die here step by step."

WORK IN THE PRISON

Related to the above mentioned Zionist policy of "step by step" death is the goal of exploiting the militants' physical ability as much as possible. They

used us as free labor power in the Zionist factories, to maintain the Zionist economy as well as possible. For the first four years, we were forced to work in these factories. In addition to getting poor meals, we were given four cigarettes each. We would make nets for the tanks, leather products and other kinds of work. After the strikes and sit-ins we had, work was no longer compulsory. This gave us more time for raising our cultural level and using our time doing things that benefit us and not the enemy. When we left the prison, there were no Palestinians working in the Zionist factories.

CHANGE IN TREATMENT

A remarkable point that is worth mentioning is the change we noticed on the part of some Zionist jailers. This was remarkable, considering the jailers' training which emphasized that we were the slaves and they the masters, like blacks and whites in Zimbabwe. Most of the jailers in the Zionist prisons are Oriental Jews. In fact, the director of the prison prevented them from talking with us, except for routine procedural matters. But during the last years of our imprisonment, we were able to hold debates with some of them. To learn Hebrew and other languages was a great benefit to us in this context. We were capable of convincing some of them of the justice of the Palestinian cause. Confronted with our arguments, most of them would say, "You are right. But what can I do? It is not me who makes the decisions... etc." As an example, (.....) an immigrant from Eastern Europe was one of those with whom we had such discussions. He is now in the prison. Very often he expressed his belief that "the Palestinian cause is a just one. From the beginning, the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state was not the correct solution for the crisis in Palestine. Now, I find

myself living in this state as others do.”

Other jailers expressed their sincere desire, were it possible, to return to live in their countries of origin. They mentioned the names of many Jewish families who couldn't bear the life in the Zionist entity and so left it eventually. These people, the jailers said, sometimes could not reach the countries they wanted. A jailer told us, “about 600 families are now staying in Italy, trying to get another destination and unwilling to return to Israel.” The jailers added that Israel urges the Jewish Agency and other Jewish associations not to give those Jews any assistance so as to force them to return to the Zionist entity. It is the same, they said, as that happens to Russian Jews who are deceived by the Zionist propaganda and never realize the fact until they leave their countries.

AIDA SAAD
BORN: 1951
ARRESTED: 1969



The motive behind my joining the military struggle is the picture which I have grown up with and which still sticks in my memory. It is the picture of the Zionist occupation of the Gaza Strip in 1956. I remember how our young men and children were killed and our houses blown up; how the Israeli jets were bombing and shooting, killing many of us; how the Zionist soldiers were rounding us up in schools and streets. I remember how I was running with my mother, both bare-footed and starving, to escape death. This is the picture that was imprinted in my memory as child. It made me ask; why are these people killing us?

When I became 14, my elder brother was an officer in the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) and another was a soldier. I began to wonder: Why does my brother carry that gun? Whom is he going to shoot? Why does he wear this uniform? My brother answered: 'I don't have the Palestinian identity card. Palestine has been occupied and renamed "Israel" Palestine exists no more on the map of the world. I

have to restore Palestine and my Palestinian identity.' I, too, felt that I should carry a gun. But I was too young then.

After the June war of 1967, my brother was pursued by the Israelis. I knew everything: Why did my brother hide his gun! Why didn't he carry it openly as usual! There were many arrests. I would hear some one is arrested. The other day I heard that he was killed. Why was he killed? I used to wonder. The Israelis used to take a prisoner to re-enact the military operation he had done. Then they shot him dead. They used to say that he tried to run away. But in fact, he didn't. How could he run away or think to while his hands and legs were chained? I began to realize their cheating and intrigues. They would let him walk and then shoot him in the back. I began to realize their brutality more and more.

Early in 1968, I joined the ranks of the Palestinian revolution with full awareness of my choice and destiny. It might be because I was so young that the leadership didn't give me a big role in the organization. I understood that. My duty was to take food and weapons to the commandos who were pursued by the enemy, and to convey messages from one base to another. My duty remained as such till one day in June 1968. I heard about the martyrdom of militant Mazen Abu Ghazali. My blood raged within my veins. On my insistence, the leadership agreed to recruit me as a full militant. I consider that day as my birthday. After I had my training outside the occupied territories, I returned to begin my new task. I knew that the road would be difficult and paved with hardships and sufferings. But I believed that the troubles I was going to undergo would allow a child of my people to smile.

“I WANT TO RESTORE MY IDENTITY”

On 16 March 1969, I received instructions to go on a splendid mission. In the meantime, I was very emotional. But my love for my people, their pain in the refugee camps, the humiliation of the occupiers erupted in my mind to dominate any other thought and suppress any other consideration.

At midnight, I headed to my target, the Zionist military barrack at Al-Shoja'aya quarter in Gaza. I was determined that the explosion of my grenade would bring down the Zionist entity imposed on my land and make the whole world hear my lesson. I want to restore my homeland... I want to restore my identity. When I drew near the barrack, I felt that I was holding my soul in my hands, and every step forward was drawing me nearer to certain death, but the memory of the bombs and shells thrown on us pushed me to hurry into the barrack. I threw the first grenade... a tank caught fire, I threw the second... another tank caught fire. I was close to the second target so I was struck by some shrapnel. The flames of the burnt tanks turned the darkness of the night into daylight. My wounds made it too difficult for me to withdraw in time and avoid the bullets of the guards. Thus I fell captive, and from that moment the beating and torture started.

INTERROGATION, TORTURE

The interrogation started before they gave me any first aid, just after I was arrested. They took off all my clothes under the pretext of checking me. They pulled me by the hair, spat on me, dragged me on the floor, kicked me, and extinguished cigarettes on my body. They wanted to know 'the other people' who were with me, and from where I had brought the

grenades. The next day, the interrogation took the form of a play. They made me sit at a table on which delicious foods were laid. Also there were a knife and a fork. Pressmen were attending and taking photographs. The interrogator introduced me to those present: 'She threw grenades at us, but we offer her a good meal.' However, this performance was for propaganda purposes, nothing more. For, how could I eat while my wounds were not treated? Anyhow, I was prevented from drinking, though the water was in front of me. After this farce of Zionist "generosity", they refused to give me water unless I answered their questions.

After that I was taken in a car. I thought I was on my way to hospital, but I found my destination to be Gaza Central Prison. I was astonished to find my blind sister, even my classmates, also there."

Just after my arrival, the interrogation was resumed. I was severely beaten so I would give the names of my fellow commandos. To spare myself some beating, I told a lie that my companion was named Walid. They rounded up everyone they could who was named Walid. I told them my companion was not among them.

They told me, 'your mother has given us the name of so and so. Your brother has told us about so and so', they put me face to face with my brother so that we might confess. But the information given by each of us was contradictory. My commando operation was carried out a day before my brother's planned marriage. I said to my brother, 'You sent me to buy your bride a bottle of perfume. Excuse me, but I didn't. I went to carry bombs to secure an identity card for your coming baby.' At that moment my brother took me to his chest and began crying. His

tears rolled down warm on my cheeks. The way the soldiers separated us affirmed my belief that they hadn't any human feelings. I became more confident that my brother would follow the trail I had blazed."

DEPRESSION

Their questions were centered on my military training: Where? When? And who were my partners in the operation? They didn't believe that I had carried out the operation alone. There were about ten interrogators. Before I could answer the question of one, the other confused me with his. I had to answer different questions from different people at the same time. This overloaded my mind. Many times they offered me a cup of coffee and another kind of drink, but I refused to accept anything. I feared that there might be some drugs in the drink. I knew that from the experiences of other militants.

Then came a group of soldiers. They quieted everyone down. My family's house was in the neighbourhood, and they said, 'Now you will hear an explosion. It will be in your house.' They continued, 'If you don't tell the names of your partners, your house will be blown up.' I laughed sarcastically and said: 'I was alone. I have no names to tell. Do what you want.' After some minutes I heard an explosion. In fact, it was our house.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE

After that the psychological torture began. Each interrogator had his own method. One of them said, 'I will treat you as your father would. Tell me the truth, otherwise another one will come and strip you, beat or rape you.' I was able to perceive their deceitful words and looks. How could they be ho-

nest? Had they been so, they would have never come to steal my country! When these methods failed, they resumed beating me. They beat me in such a way that it left no traces on my body.

I had been able to send a report to my leaders about the operation I had executed, and about the interrogation inside the prison. My captors asked me, 'How could you send a report to your leadership? We heard it on "Sout al-Assifa" (The radio of the Palestinian revolution).' I said, 'I am in jail. How could I send a report to my leadership?' This incident assured me that my enemy is dull. I realized that anyone with strong beliefs can do whatever he wants, even though he might be in prison.

A considerable part of the interrogation was centered on my brother. They threatened me, saying, 'When we arrest him, we are going to make him have sex with you.'

"Before the trial, they introduced me to a group of psychologists. There were about 30 of them. I remember there were some oranges on the table before me. I smiled. I imagined what would happen if those oranges turned into grenades. I heard them saying, 'An 18-year-old girl, with a certain beauty, an acceptable financial situation, engaged, and who doesn't need anything! What made her throw herself to death?' My answer was that the motive was my love for my people.

TRIAL

On 14 April 1969, they put me on trial. It was a play more than a trial. I knew that the sentence had been already determined. The moment I got out of the armoured vehicle to enter the court, I saw dozens

of my Palestinian people there. I saw the Palestinian children holding bouquets of roses. The smiles of those children, their staring eyes, made it clear to me that they had understood the meaning of what I had done. My mother's looks at that moment were full of love and pride for what I had done. I felt that the bonds between me and my people had become stronger.

Then the trial began. The judge charged me on six counts: throwing grenades in a barrack, blowing up armoured vehicles, being a member of al-Fateh organization, 'illegal' penetration outside the occupied territories and receiving military training, assisting the Palestinian commandos, and organizing secret groups. The trial was concluded, and I received a 20-year sentence. During the trial, I heard a journalist say, 'I want to ask the defendant if she repents what she did.' The judge answered, 'Her eyes show that she doesn't. Her looks are a sufficient response.' I laughed and asked the judge, 'How could you know I am not repentant?' At that moment another journalist asked me the same question. 'Are you sorry or not?' My answer was that, 'Really, I am sorry because I was not able to set off all the grenades that I had.' In fact, I was sorry for that. Disorder prevailed in the court and some soldiers rushed towards me and returned me to prison.

RENEWED TORTURE

After the trial I thought that there would be no more interrogations. Yet they lasted for seven more months. They would wake me up at about 2 P.M. and take me to be interrogated. They would say, 'Come and see your brother, we have arrested him.' Then I would be confronted by some young men, most of whom were naked. My captors told me that the

young men had confessed about me. I knew that they were using me as a sort of psychological torture for them. For example, they said to one of them: 'If you don't confess we are going to rape her in front of you.'

One night they woke me up. They confronted me with a fellow, whom I didn't know at first. For ten minutes I was unable to recognize him. My failure to recognize him anguished me. His face was red and covered with blood. They repeated the question, if I knew the man, but I denied it. So they asked him to introduce himself to me. I was shocked. He was one of my best friends and a member of another organization. I wanted to talk to him to raise his morale and encourage him. But I found it better to keep silent and pretend not to know him. Unfortunately, this made me sorry. They started beating us both.

On another day they took me to him. They asked me to take off my clothes before him, as casually as if they were asking me to have a candy. I refused. The young man shouted, 'Leave her!' I knew then that they had threatened him. 'If you don't confess you'll be made to have sex with her in front of everyone.' You know, due to our environment, our respect for our customs and traditions, and the respect our men feel towards women, he was ready to tell many lies so as not to do what he had been asked to.

The investigation came to an end. Once I was visited by a guy carrying a bouquet of flowers. He handed me a letter 'signed' by some notables and mayors in the Gaza Strip calling on me to plea for mercy. I realized that he was an enemy agent. I refused. After that he came with some intelligence men. They started to call me names: criminal, inhuman... etc. After that they took me to the Ramle prison where I stayed till my release.

IN RAMLE PRISON

The prison authorities didn't spare a means to provoke and irritate us. Their aim was to destroy us politically, physically and morally.

At the beginning we were put in the same section with the Zionist prisoners. We protested this because most of them belonged to the underworld: criminals, prostitutes and others who used opium and hashish even in the prison. Many times the prison authorities detected these materials in their belongings. During my early imprisonment, I saw one of them breaking the window, taking a piece of glass and cutting her stomach and hand. As I saw her doing this I was shocked and cried hysterically. Prostitution dominated their conversation. Shoshana Rashdi, for example, used to say, "Whenever I go out for the holiday, I usually go with (X) and (Y) who practise sex with me and give me 30 IL each." It is worth to mention that Shoshana and other Zionist prisoners are allowed to spend some days outside the prison from time to another. However, due to our protests, we succeeded in forcing the authorities to let us live in a separate branch of the prison.

Yet, the administration of the prison tried to use those girls as trouble shooters against us and provoke them to beat us. When Afifa Bannoura, (liberated with us) was brought to the prison, the jailers began calling us bad names: murderers, criminals,... etc... Next day, while I was working in the kitchen, one of those girls came and tried to stab me with a dagger. I hid under the table, then ran and told the administration. Their response was only to "threaten" her. In comparison, when one of us did anything they disapprove, they would beat her and put her in a solitary cell for a week with no food, only bread and water.

PUNITIVE MEASURES

Their treatment to us expressed deliberate hatred. Once, my niece, (my sister's daughter), Suzan, came to visit me with my mother. Before my imprisonment, she loved me very much for my kindness to her. She took a barette from her hair and gave it to me as an expression of deep affection. The jailer standing beside me prevented me from taking it. I asked her to let me take it and promised to give it to her when my niece left. But she refused. My niece got angry and believed I had refused to take the present. She stopped visiting me until she was 11 years old and understood the situation.

During the visits we used to stand behind a wall one meter high and one meter wide while the visitor stood on the other side. I was forbidden to kiss my mother whenever she visited me. The jailer once ordered us: "Only shake hands". My mother got angry and said, "The more wide you make the wall, the more hatred we feel towards you."

THERESE: A PALESTINIAN ARAB

Therese Halsä was one of my fellow militants in Ramle prison, from Acre city in the 1948 occupied part of Palestine, so called "Israel". She was arrested with Rima Tannusa after hijacking an airliner to Lydda airport in May 1972. The chauvinist jailers insisted that she speak Hebrew with her mother whenever the latter visited her daughter, under the pretext that Therese was an "Israeli". Therese insisted that she is a Palestinian Arab and that the Arabic language is her mother tongue. Consequently, she refused to meet her mother on that occasion. This case developed to such an extent that the authorities finally gave in.

PALESTINE ON HER HAND

A prison operation on Therese's arm made it almost senseless and resulted in wrinkles on the palm of her hand. Once I saw her sitting looking at her opened hand. "What are you looking at, Therese?" I asked. "Look Aida", she said "now the palm of my hand has turned to a map of Palestine. These wrinkles are the mountains of Jerusalem and Hebron. Here is Acre. This Haifa. This is Jaffa. This Gaza."

RIMA TANNUS
BORN: 1952
ARRESTED: 1972



I was arrested after my participation in hijacking an airliner from Belgium to Lydda airport in occupied Palestine. The plane had on board some Zionist soldiers who had booked tickets on that airline rather than El al for security reasons.

I am a Jordanian. The motive behind my joining the Palestinian revolution was the human aspect of the Palestinian cause, not the fact that I am an Arab. The issue of humanity is one; its oneness is universal and cannot be divided.

After the June war, I was deeply impressed by the sight of Palestinian refugees crossing the River Jordan, fleeing the death spread by the Zionist war machine in West Bank and Gaza Strip. I saw how those people were concentrated in camps in tents which could neither protect them against the hot summer nor the cold winter. In Shniller camp, I saw how people, my age, were living under the hardest conditions of life, and they had done nothing wrong. I began to wonder if I weren't, one day, be transfor-

med into a refugee by the Zionist expansionist policy and face the same conditions. This gave me more understanding of the dilemma of the 1948 Palestinian refugees. They have been the victims at whose expense the Zionist state was established, while the present ones are the victims of its expansion.

I couldn't help feeling Palestinian anguish and suffering. Everyday I felt compelled to go to Shniller camp. I made some friends there and began to spend most my days with them. My struggle in the Palestinian revolution started then. Later on, I became dissatisfied with the kind of struggle I was carrying on. I began dreaming of executing an operation inside occupied Palestine. My dream was realized on May 8th. 1972, when three militants and I set out in the operation with the hope of liberating some fellow militants in the Zionist jails.

OPERATION

In spite of the strict security measures in the airport, we succeeded in bringing in with us our weapons and explosives. The plane took off and landed in Vienna before taking off again to Lydda airport. As the plane flew off the Austrian air space, Therese and I rushed to the toilet to get our pistols and explosives ready. Rushing back to the other two militants, Abu Nidal and Zakareya, we gave them the pistols and hurried back to our assigned places in the plane. Abu Nidal then rushed to the cockpit and declared our authority on the plane. He then addressed the passengers, telling them our aim to offer to release the Zionist soldiers on board in exchange for some of our militants in the Zionist jails.

"WE ARE IN PALESTINE"

Our happiness and pleasure were unimaginable

when we entered the Palestinian air space and saw Palestine. We kissed each other, shouting "Now we are in Palestine". Abu Nidal ordered the captain to land the plane on the airfield in such a way as to hinder the landing and taking off of any other plane.

As the plane landed, Abu Nidal talked to the airport authorities through the radio and warned them against any attempt to draw near the plane. He asked for International Red Cross representatives to carry our demands to the Zionist authorities. Negotiations lasted 24 hours with the I.R.C. representative coming and going. The plane ran out of oxygen and the air inside became very stuffy. Humanitarian considerations made Abu Nidal agree that sandwiches be brought to the passengers and fuel to the plane so that the engine would work.

ZIONIST SOLDIERS AS I.R.C.

I.R.C. supplied us with lots of sandwiches and Therese took charge of distributing them to the passengers. I stood holding hand grenade with my back towards the inside door of the plane. I was quite sure that the door was closed and there was no way to open it but from the inside. Through the windows of the plane, I could see a fuel truck coming towards the plane, bearing the Red Cross flag.

Suddenly, the door behind me was opened and a man, wearing the Red Cross uniform grabbed my hand holding the grenade and pushed himself on me so both of us fell down. At that moment also, the side doors of the plane were opened and armed men, wearing the I.R.C. uniform began shooting inside the plane. The bullets Zakareya had in his pistol were not enough to answer the automatic rifles of the armed men. He fell down with his face covered with blood;

Therese also fell down receiving some bullets in her arm; Abu Nidal was also killed. I saw one of the armed men leaning on a chair with his head bleeding. A pregnant woman was also killed.

BEATING AND TORTURE

When the shooting was over, the grenade was taken from my hand. My hands and legs were tied by a plastic wire. I was dragged by my hair to the stairs of the plane where I was pushed and rolled down to the ground. Many soldiers were there; some were in vehicles and others were on foot. Several soldiers took turns beating me on the stomach and the head and kicking me on the back. I was then dragged a small distance to where a soldier made me stand up. I found myself facing Moshe Dayan, then Minister of Defence. He asked me my name in Arabic. But when I didn't answer him, he told them to take me away. No sooner had he uttered these words than two soldiers carried me by my hands and legs and threw me into a military car.

"BURIED" ALIVE

As the car took off, a soldier blindfolded me and kept his leg on my head till the car stopped somewhere. The soldiers got out, threw me into a ditch, and began throwing earth and stones on me. "She is not worth a bullet to shoot her. Bury her alive." I heard one of them saying. They went on till I heard a voice saying "Stop doing that. Let her suffer more before we get rid of her." So I was dragged out of the ditch and thrown back into the car before it drove off to an unknown destination.

HORROR

I was thrown out of the car and two persons

dragged me, then threw me on the floor. The place was very quiet. As I was lying flat with my hands stretched tied above my head, my hands rested on a hard thing. I thought it was the leg of a human being, but they were hard and stone like. I was left this way for about two hours.

INTERROGATION

After that I was taken to another place. The blindfold was taken off my eyes. I found myself seated on a chair in front of some officers wearing their uniform.

One of them asked me my name, and when I answered, he said, "Liar" and slapped me on the face. The question was repeated several times and each time I answered I was slapped. Another one said to him words I didn't understand. They tried to untie my hands, but the plastic wire was sticking deep into my flesh to the extent that they couldn't avoid cutting it by a knife, cutting my flesh as well.

They asked me about the organization I belonged to, its leader, the people who cooperated with me in Europe.... etc. When they got no answer, they started beating me with sticks on my head and every part of my body. They didn't believe that I hadn't been to a university and participated carrying out "such an operation" as they said.

When they failed to extract any information, they took me to a big room. They took off all my clothes and tied each of my hands and legs to rings fitted in the opposite walls. The interrogation was resumed as I was laid flat on my back. It was interrupted by fierce beating and extinguishing cigarettes on my body. Cold and hot water was also poured on me.

ELECTRIC SHOCKS

Once I was blindfolded and taken into a room. I was laid on a table. I felt them putting wires on several places on my body. They took the patch off my eyes and ran out quickly slamming the door behind them. The room became completely dark. I began to hear voices: crying, weeping and sighing. Whenever I tried to move my head this way or that, strong lights flashed on my eyes. I was left as such about an hour. After that my whole body became shaking violently. I couldn't help crying loudly.

CHANGE IN STYLE

Another time, after receiving the usual "meal", as they called it, of beatings, one of them pretended to be kinder than his fellows. He ordered them to leave us alone. He said, "You are a Jordanian; what have you got to do with these Palestinians? I know you have been fooled by them. But you are still young. Tell me who are the people you deal with outside and save yourself. "Realizing that his argument was useless, and failed to make me tell him anything, he slapped me on the face and said, "I know you. You were a prostitute.... etc. "I couldn't bear hearing those words and said, "If you know your sister is a prostitute, this does not mean that all girls are prostitutes. "He got so furious that he started beating me again.

BLACKMAIL

No consideration was taken in the interrogation. It would be at any time, both at late and early hours of the day. Even my menstruation was exploited for blackmail. They prevented me access to water and never gave me any thing to deal with it. This also was made conditional on my confession.

IN RAMLE PRISON

Rather than the beating and torture I had been suffering, I was always worrying about Therese. Thanks to ".....", the militant policewoman, I knew that Therese was still alive and being in hospital. She told me that I was in Ramle Women's Prison. She was very kind to me. She would say, "You have to eat all the food I bring to you; otherwise you will break down." She used to bring me cold water and clean bandages and put them on the black spots left on my body after beating. She was indifferent to the risks she was taking by her good treatment to me.

She relieved me when she told me that there had been other militants in the prison who would hear my crying when I was under torture. She delivered to me their encouragement to keep my morale high and not to break down. However I hadn't been so lucky. A few days after I had met her, I was unable to see her any more.



Therese Halsø

"RIMA...! " "THERESE...! "

Some days before the trial, a prisoner was introduced into my room. She rested her back to the wall and managed to sit down by sliding herself down slowly to the floor. However, I noticed her unable to move one of her arms and eventually fell on that side. I drew near her and helped her sit properly. As I was

doing that, she called me in a faint voice, "Rima...! ". My happiness in hearing her voice was unimaginable. I answered her in the same tone," "Therese...! ", and held her between my arms for a while. For about three hours we didn't speak a word, fearing that we might be bugged.

"AIDA DELIVERS A MESSAGE"

Once, a paper was thrown to us through the window. I took it and went to the toilet to read it. It was sent by our fellow militants in the prison telling us that they were militants like us and encouraged us to be strong and not to give in. I tore the paper, threw it in the toilet and returned to Therese to tell her the contents.

When we met the fellow militants after the trial, they told us the risk Aida Saad, one of them, (see page 60) took in throwing us the message. They said Aida was working in the kitchen at the moment. After she had thrown the letter, Shoshana Vaknin, an Israeli prisoner, saw her standing by the window. Shoshana told the matter to the administration of the prison who summoned Aida for investigation. Having no material evidence against her, the administration left Aida unpunished. Yet, Shoshana bore Aida such a grudge that she followed her to the kitchen, took some of the metal plates before her and hit her on the head. Aida fell down losing consciousness for some five minutes. However, such secret contacts between us continued till we came together.

TRIAL

One day in August 1972, we were taken to the court. Our trial lasted about two weeks. We asked that Valencia Langer defend us, but they refused.

They assigned us a lawyer of their own. This guy wanted me to tell him things that I hadn't told to the interrogators. "I am going to defend you; so you have to tell me frankly everything," he said. When I told him I had nothing to add, he pretended to get angry and left.

The charges against me were many: carrying arms, commitment to an "illegal" organization, hijacking a plane, deliberate killing,... etc. I wasn't allowed to speak anything concerning why I carried arms and hijacked the plane. However, the trial was concluded and both of us, Therese and I, received life sentences.

BACK TO RAMLE PRISON

After the trial we were taken back to Ramle prison, and to live with our fellow militants this time. This relieved us a great deal from the suffering we had endured during the detainment and interrogation period.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Living conditions are very bad. Food is insufficient, whether one is speaking of quantity or quality. For breakfast, we had about half a loaf, two olives, a quarter of a tomato and half an egg. For lunch, it is usually potatoes. Every day a different dish, but the components are usually potatoes. For dinner, it is soup. I used to work in the kitchen. The dish is mainly boiled water with few pieces of carrots floating on surface, with no butter or fat to give it some taste. We used to add to it some old dry bread to form a meal. The meat we were usually supplied with was of the worst quality, and only two or three pieces to each. I used to boil it for several hours, but it was uncooked. We even used to throw it out.

Medical care was very bad. Lotfeya Al-Jamal was suffering some fractions on her back caused by beating during the interrogation. Aisha Audi was suffering from an ulcer, rheumatism and other ailments. Maryam Shakhsheer was also in very bad health. The pharmacist in the prison would give them only tranquillizers. We used to go on hunger strikes demanding an improvement in the medical care. Our strikes were brutally suppressed.

We mentioned these conditions to the representatives of the I.R.C. They would say that there were limits to their ability to intervene with the prison authorities.

WORK

We were about 52 political prisoners in the prison. Our work ranged between working in the kitchen, in the garden of the prison, cleaning the rooms and other manual work. We refused to work in the workshops whose products were to benefit the Zionist military establishment.

EDUCATION

From 2-5 P.M., our time was free. After lunch we would use some time to educate ourselves. The I.R.C. supplied us with books and stationary for that purpose. Some of us were educated. Others were not. Lotfeya and Aisha were teachers of Arabic, Sa'ida of English, Therese of Hebrew... etc. We were taught Arabic, English, French, and Hebrew. We had some non-Arab political prisoners who helped in the teaching process, including Terre Fleener, an American from Texas, Brigit, a German, and Ludvina, a Dutch.

DIVIDE AND OPPRESS

The prison authorities were not happy to see us benefiting from such self-education. They even tried to divide our ranks by trying to make us suspicious of each other. For instance, from time to time they would inspect our belongings in the cells. They would pick one person and keep her belongings untouched, while the others' belongings were completely turned upside down. This was repeated to make us suspicious of the one who was spared. Or they would call another prisoner from time to time to the directory, merely to sit there and talk nonsense to her. We were aware of these attempts. Each one would talk to the others on everything that happened to her.

They also tried to arouse the Israeli prisoners against us. Though most of them belonged to the underworld and had nothing common with us, we succeeded in winning some of them to our side. Our means were to teach them some knitting or anything else for their benefit. However, we were aware that our problem was not with them and that they were but victims of the Zionist entity, as we were.

RASMEYA AUDI

BORN: 1948
ARRESTED: 1969



At midnight on 28 February 1969, my family and I were awakened by repeated strong knocks on the door. As soon as my father opened it, we saw him pushed back by the Zionist soldiers thrusting the barrels of their rifles against his chest. At that moment, some of them started beating us while others began searching the house after turning everything upside down. Then we were blindfolded and our hands tied. The soldiers took us all, my parents, my paralyzed sister, and myself, to the Maskobeya (Russian Compound) prison in Jerusalem. This was after my participation in two military operations in Jerusalem.

In Maskobeya prison they separated me from the others. Several interrogators surrounded me and started beating me. Meanwhile they were laughing hysterically to make me break down. One of them was beating me on my head with an iron rod. After that they took me to another cell where some young men were being tortured. When I failed to identify any of them, they brought me back to be beaten again.

They brought my parents and sisters, even Fatima the paralyzed one, before me and started beating them. They said I had to choose between confession of the charges made against me or my family would continue to be tortured and our house blown up. Unable to bear the screaming of my parents, and especially of my dear sister, poor Fatima, I confessed to all the charges they made. Nevertheless, our house was blown up and the torture continued.

TORTURE

During the interrogation I suffered three kinds of torture: physical, psychological and sexual. Due to the blows against my head, I lost hearing in one of my ears for about a year. Many times I was completely stripped and thrown on the floor. Rather than beat and kick me, they would extinguish cigarettes all over my body. I was pinched in various places, mainly my breasts, causing my body to turn black and blue. Once I was left totally naked. They brought a stick and tried to take my virginity. Their inhumanity and savagery can be best illustrated in the following incident.

They brought my father, an old man in poor health, and started beating me before him till my mouth began bleeding. My father rushed to me and took me in his arms. The blood stuck to his clothes. Then they violently separated us, and forcefully took my clothes off. They ordered him to take off all his clothes and have sex with me. Upon his refusal, they started beating him and taking off his clothes. As soon as they took off his jacket, he lost consciousness and broke down

Another time, they stripped me and tied each of my hands and legs to a chain linked to a roller fixed

to the walls. The chains were pulled so that my hands and legs were also pulled tight open. Then they brought in a naked young man and ordered him to rape me. I started shouting and screaming and then I fainted. They took me to hospital thinking I was paralyzed. When I regained consciousness 24 hours later, they brought me back to prison and started the beating again. Whenever I lost consciousness they poured cold water over me.

NOT TO BE PASSED BY

Sexual torture against women is a deliberate Israeli policy. From the very beginning of our revolution, our enemy realized the risks posed by the participation of Arab women, in general, and Palestinian women in particular in the struggle. They realized how sensitive this matter is to Arabs. They believed that such torture would make traditional parents think many times before they let their daughters take part in the struggle, due to certain considerations of honour which women stand for in a traditional family. They would say to us, "You are still young. You should have looked after yourselves and gotten married..." which is the concern of a traditional woman: to get married and be a housewife... as if it were the sole role of a woman.

WITH YAAKOUB AUDI, RASMEYA'S FIANCE

As for psychological torture, they took me once to a cell where I found a young man who I couldn't identify. They said, "Now you can decide with him the things you want to confess." They locked us in the cell and left. The cell was bugged. I looked at the young man and said, "Comrade, who are you?" And then I had a deadly shock. He was Yaakoub Audi, my

fiance. My inability to identify him was due to the effects of torture on his face. He is now in the Ramle (Men's) prison. He was charged with supervising military operations including those I took part in. In fact, though he was my fiance, he was not informed of the operations I performed. The sentences he got were more than those that others, including myself, received, even though we and not he had carried out the operations he was sentenced for.

BLACKMAIL

During the investigation, they denied me any water. They would put a cup of water in front of me and say, "This is the water. Tell all you know and you will have it and have a better chance to be released. Otherwise, you are going to be left to die of thirst."

Moreover, I was prevented from going to the toilet for three consecutive days. Even when they let me, they cut the water off in the bathroom. The water was deliberately cut off because they knew my need for it during my menstrual period. After a week I had quite a foul smell. Even the interrogators wrinkled their noses at it. At one point, they poured water on me, and although this reduced the smell for a short time, later it became worse again. They left me like that for about ten consecutive days.

They used another method. They would bring my paralyzed sister and say, "either you save her by confessing or we will kill her". In fact, my paralyzed sister, Fatima, told me that they tortured her and burnt her with cigarette butts.

After all their violent methods had failed, they

tried a "kind" one. One of them tried to play out a love story with me. He was known as "Morris". I remember that he spoke Arabic with an Egyptian accent. He would tell me, "I love you and can't bear seeing you in such a situation, receiving such a treatment. You have to do something to rescue yourself. What makes you carry all the responsibility while others are free outside? Mention the names of those who joined you in the operations. I promise that we will get married after your release and live abroad." Once he played out this little drama for a whole day. Anyhow, it was a good opportunity for me to avoid some torture that day.

Regarding the Maskobeya prison, it is a torture compound. Although they talk very much about Nazi torture against the Jews, in fact the Zionists are more savage, brutal and filthy than the Nazis. At least, the Nazis put their victims into the gas chambers **where** they all died. As for us, everyone died **a hundred** times a day.

During the investigation they tried to make **each** of us suspicious of the other. They said, for **instance**, " 'X' confessed so and so about you, **why don't you** confess about him as he did about **you**? Sometimes they brought us tape recordings, but **they** were all in all distorted or they might make someone **learn some** sentences and then record them to deceive **his fellow** militants into thinking that he had confessed. But we were always aware of these intrigues.

IN RAMLE PRISON

After the trial, I was taken with ten **others to the** Ramle (Women's) prison. There we met the fellow militants. In our first days there we were faced with cruel treatment. The prison authorities used some

Israeli women prisoners to torture and trouble us. They mobilized them against us by telling them that we were "criminals and murderers" and pushed them into beating us. I remember that during our first days in the prison, the Israeli women prisoners tried to put lit cigarettes into our beds and pour dirty water onto them. Once they hid an iron bar and waited for a chance to hit me on the head and kill me. Another time one of them tried to pour boiling water on one of my cellmates.

Reporters would come and visit the prison. The outward appearance of the prison resembles a hotel, not a prison, for there were gardens full of trees and flowers. but we were prohibited from visiting this part of the prison. Their treatment to us contradicted the simplest concept of human rights. The prison director generally prevented us from meeting journalists. The only ones we were allowed to meet were those whose point of view was the same as the authorities. The only exception was that once a Swedish journalist visited us and wrote objectively about what he had seen. Because he wrote about some concrete facts of the life we were leading, a disciplinary measure was taken against us. We were locked into a dim suffocating room for several days. This was the response to our telling the truth to a reporter!

HUNGER STRIKE

The weekly visit allowed to our relatives was turned into a monthly one. Bringing books to the prison, even at our relatives' expense, was forbidden. The only way we could change the situation was to declare a hunger strike.

On the first day of our strike we put forward our

demands. They included our right to have books, to be better treated, and to be considered war or political prisoners instead of criminals. For the first week they remained indifferent to us. Then a psychiatrist came to talk to us. I offered him our demands. He began to query us separately to break our unity regarding the strike. He tried to convince me to end my hunger strike in the hope that it would convince the others to follow. But all of us were aware of what he was up to and remained steadfast and insistent. Meanwhile, our health deteriorated. The prison authorities managed to feed us by force by means of pipes stretched through the nose to the stomach. This resulted in various rheumatisms and scratches in the abdomen. Some of us were hospitalized.

The hunger strike lasted for 12 consecutive days, after which the prison authorities complied with our demands and brought us books, though they were frivolous. They also made some changes in the visiting procedure. Monthly visits were allowed for 3 adult relatives or two adults and two youngsters. Concerning treatment, they promised it would be improved.

Our strike was successful due to our unified stand against the prison authorities. This unified stand was intensified by the fact that the authorities did not, and do not, distinguish between prisoners from the different Palestinian organizations. We were all subjected to the same torture and insults. We achieved national unity from our first days in prison. Our cultural, educational, and recreational programs were carried out in a unified, collective manner. The spirit of democracy prevailed among us. We would argue and debate all subjects in an open, democratic way. Each of us expressed her opinion, point of view, and analysis on every matter. Even when we had to take a

certain decision concerning a certain issue, we would discuss it, argue about it and adopt the more revolutionary and active attitude irrespective of the person who had generated it or the organization she belonged to. This, in fact, assisted us in overcoming many problems and obstacles in the prison. The prison authorities didn't approve this. They always tried to break our unity and revolutionary spirit.

The prison authorities prevented us from reciting any nationalist poetry. But we didn't comply. We knew that the punishment for such a thing was either to be locked in a cell, forbidden visitors, or locked in a room during the break when the prisoners are let out in the prison to take some sun. The mere mention of the word "Palestine" was prevented.

Once my nephew, a 5-year-old child, came to visit me with some others. I asked him to sing me a song. He started to sing a song about Palestine. The jailer was there as usual. No sooner had she heard him say the word Palestine than she managed to shut him up by her hand. Yet, the child went on singing. The jailer was outraged and declared the visit over, even though only ten minutes of the half hour had passed. I protested against this action, and my punishment was that I was prevented from receiving visitors for 3 months, in addition to being put in a cell for a week.

EDUCATION

They tried to prevent us from doing anything to benefit ourselves. But there are certain activities which they couldn't prevent us from doing, even though they tried. For instance, international law gives a prisoner the right to education. Among us there were teachers and students. Some of us had only received a basic education, while others were

completely illiterate. Our main priority was to set up educational courses to teach these prisoners and raise their educational level. The prison authorities tried to hinder our activities. They refused to supply us with a classroom and prevented us from receiving the copy-books and pens supplied by the International Red Cross. However, we succeeded in implementing our projects.

We had classes in scientific, philosophical, literary and economic subjects. But they didn't allow us to go on. When they realized how these lectures were benefitting us, they prevented us from continuing under the pretext that we were making plans against them under the guise of education. This was totally untrue because the lectures were delivered in the presence of the jailers. Even if we were to plan against them, would it have been logical to do it in the presence of the jailers?

They spared no effort to harass us. We would prepare entertainment programs including plays, folkloric dances and songs. When they saw how these programs rested and relaxed us, they prohibited them. They assumed that these activities were a threat to their security, and that we should have official permission from the appropriate authorities before performing such activities. They tried to totally cut us off from the outside world. Only in the latest period of our imprisonment did they allow us to receive a book from our relatives once a month. I remember that once I was sent seven books over seven consecutive months by my family, but I received only one. The other six were allegedly "censored", though they had nothing to do with the Palestinian or Arab causes.

WORK IN THE PRISON

There were certain factories and workshops connected with the prison. Work went from 7:30 A.M. till 2:00 P.M. After 2:00 clock we were allowed to stay outside our cells till about 5 o'clock. She who didn't work had one hour break at 1:00 P.M., when other prisoners were at work. That meant anyone who refused work would be alone. The jobs were clothes making, paper rolling... etc. The remuneration we received for our work was trivial, some agoras (Israeli currency) which can buy no more than 8 cigarettes of the worst quality. Our main incentive to work was merely to do something to move our muscles and, more important, have time to meet the other girls and talk together.

The working condition were very hard. The authorities would require us to finish a certain quantity a day, irrespective of our psychological or health conditions. They would goad us, saying, "Why are the Israeli girls more productive?" The comparison here is illogical, for we didn't have the incentive the Israeli prisoners had to produce more. Israelis are allowed to take a vacation outside the prison every two months; they can go on picnics and their sentences might be shortened. They might get good jobs after their release. In contrast we didn't have any of these privileges and opportunities, especially since most of us were serving life sentences. Even more, we were aware that we were working for an enemy who was trying to exploit us and totally exhaust us.

Another aspect of our life in prison was our observation of Palestinian national events. For instance, on their "day of independence", which is our day of disaster they brought army musicians to perform concerts. They tried to impose their celebrations on

us and force us to look at that day as they did. Our reaction was to sing Palestinian national songs and hold political discussions. Their reaction was violent and direct. Once the authorities called soldiers to the prison and the latter started beating us after they had attacked us with gas. They dragged us back to the rooms chained. They also prevented us from receiving visitors and exercising other rights.

Conversely, when there were commando operations, such as the Maalot operation and the Kamal Adwan operation, they turned our life in the prison to hell. Strict measures were taken automatically without any awareness on our part of what was going on. They didn't turn on the radio or the T.V. at the time of the news broadcasts, nor did they bring us the newspapers as they usually did. They began to curse us and call us names. In our own way, we used to know what was behind these measures. Sometimes the jailers encouraged the Israeli women prisoners to quarrel with us. This was the jailers' way of expressing their hatred and enmity against us that day. In fact, serious fights would occur between us and them on those occasions.

In contrast, when Sadat went to Jerusalem, they turned that day into a festival. They kept the radio on for the whole day. We began to sing national and revolutionary songs and shouted anti-Sadat slogans. Of course, their measures against us on such occasions are well known.

IMPORTANT ISSUE

There is an important matter I want to make clear. At the beginning, the jailer would introduce us to foreign visitors as murderers and criminals. Later on, we influenced her so that she began to understand

and respect us as Palestinians. Whenever we went on strike, she came to us and argued with us. Once we refused to go to work and demanded better treatment and health conditions. That jailer, who had become relatively understanding, began to say, "I know that books are your main priority. I fear that if you go on strike they will take all the books you have." In fact, the director of the prison issued her orders that all the books were to be taken out of our library. The orders in the prison were given by fanatical Zionists.

SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS

In spite of the difficult conditions in the prison, we succeeded in organizing ourselves. Our first concern was to intensify the other militants' consciousness towards woman's efforts and capabilities, and her role in society and the struggle. I can say with great satisfaction that in the Ramle prison we "graduated" women with great capabilities. The level of awareness we achieved was reflected on the prison authorities themselves. For instance, in the last period of our imprisonment these authorities managed to prevent the jailers from talking with us outside of strictly business matters. If this means anything it is that the authorities feared debates between us and the jailers in the prison. We had no material means of struggle, and all we had was our revolutionary thought and awareness. Many times we felt as if we were the jailers and they the prisoners. We felt ourselves free by our thoughts, awareness and struggle. Honestly, I can say that though the ten-year period of my imprisonment was very painful, nevertheless our experiences and achievements enriched us. Ten years of imprisonment and suffering had failed to break down our spirits and morale. Our consciousness grew commensurate with our suffering and torture. It is true that we had different levels of experience and

awareness, but each of us developed so that she could stay committed to our principles even though she might be put alone in prison.

RELEASE

The inhuman practices of the Zionist entity were inflicted on us until the last moment. We were taken from prison with hands tied and eyes blindfolded, and were thrown into buses which drove us to the airport. They warned us not to speak a word. They bade "farewell" to us by beating us with rifle butts. One of the released prisoners, Aida Saad, was burnt on the head with a cigarette. Even when the plane took off, our heads and legs were tied to the seat. Anyone who spoke a word was beaten. One was beaten because he was seen moving his lips. He said, "But I am praying." They beat him more. I, myself asked permission to go to the toilet. They beat me.

After the plane landed, an Israeli soldier pulled me by the hand and kicked me on the back. After that he violently pulled off the blindfold and pushed me. I found myself on the stairs of the aeroplane where an International Red Cross worker received me and told me that we were in Geneva. Their brutality and cruelty deprived us of those moments of pleasure that a released prisoner feels after ten years of imprisonment. It is the opposite to the treatment given to Avraham, the exchanged Israeli prisoner. When he passed before us in the car, he was smiling and waved to us. He looked cheerful and highly spirited. The contrasting moods of us and him reflect the morality and humanity of each of our captors.

ALIA ABU DAYYA

BORN: 1950
ARRESTED: 1977



I was a leader of a commando unit in the West Bank. After participating in several military operations, I was instructed by my leadership to limit my activities to preparing explosive materials. I was arrested after the capture of a member of my unit and the death of another comrade in a military operation in Beersheba. It may be that the interrogators succeeded in extracting some information about me from the arrested comrade due to the severe torture. When I was arrested, I was taken to Hebron prison.

INTERROGATION

I denied all the charges against me. They arrested my father and brothers and began beating them as well, charging them with the knowledge of all my activities. Many times, I lost consciousness.

Once, after beating me severely, the interrogators took me to another room where I saw my father being beaten. One of the men there held him up by the collar of his shirt so that I could recognize him.

He then kicked him to the ground and shouted: "Confess! " My father, an old man in his nineties, cried faintly: "I know nothing."

The interrogator who had taken me to my father slapped me on the face, saying "You prostitute! Are you going to confess to save your father or let him die? " When I insisted on knowing nothing, he left me to the soldiers who dragged me by my hair back to the room and began beating me with sticks until I lost consciousness. They poured hot and cold water on me.

Once an interrogator used a different style with me. He said that I had been fooled by the "terrorists" and that my refusal to mention the names of the persons I dealt with was due to fear of their "retaliation". He offered me his "protection" if I would collaborate with him. On my insistence that I knew nothing, I was brought some material evidence I couldn't ignore. I confessed being member of the unit, but insisted that the leader of the unit was the martyred comrade, who was my sister's husband.

DIALOGUE

The interrogator once asked me:

- Where do you live? With your family?
- I am adult and I live where I please.
- But you are a girl and not allowed to live outside your family?
- Why are your girls then allowed to leave home when they are 18 years old?
- Our society accepts this. But as an Arab, your society links this matter with considerations of honor.
- Today, our society gives a girl the same rights

and obligations as a boy. The country and the people's honor is above all other honor.

— Do you mean you live outside your family's house?

— One day I live there, and two days outside it.

— To live with boys?

— To end your occupation, your oppression and your exploitation, I will live with the devil.

TRIAL

The Zionist authorities refused to let me meet the lawyer hired by my family. However, some relatives in the 1948 occupied part of Palestine, hired a lawyer from this area, Mohamad Kiwan.

On the day of the trial, I was taken to court in Lydda. I was charged with exploding rockets in a barrack on the Hebron — Dhareya highway, a military operation in Beersheba, attacking military patrols, distributing provocative pamphlets, and recruiting militants. The judge said that if I confessed doing these things, and gave them the names of other militants dealing with me, my sentence would be reduced. The judge alleged that some of the confessions had my thumbprints on them.

The lawyer rejected the confessions on the basis that they were taken while I had been tortured and beaten. In fact, I am illiterate and I didn't know the contents of the papers I was made to thumbprint. In addition, I was forced to sign blank sheets of paper to be filled in later.

However, the lawyer's defence was to no avail. I was sentenced to ten years. This was in October 1977. After that, I was taken to Ramle prison.

ANOTHER TRIAL!

After trial I was taken to Ramle Women's prison. I happened to know the prisoners there by names but not personally. Knowing that I was illiterate, they managed to find time to educate me.

Ten months later, I was told by the prison authorities that I was wanted for trial. "But I have been already tried," I protested, "It's not our business," they said. However, the fellow militants advised me to go — otherwise, I would be insulted and beaten and taken by force.

JALAMY PRISON

I was taken to Jalamy prison where I was put in a room 150 x 150 cms. in dimension. They would push the food through an opening below the door with their feet. I was supplied with a bucket to use as a toilet. After a week, I was called to the director of the prison who said: "All the members of your unit are arrested and they confessed everything. You might be released if you tell the truth". "I have nothing to add," I said. "Then you condemn yourself to live all your life in prison," he responded. "It makes no difference " I said. "Under your occupation, I consider all my people to be in a greater prison." He slapped me on the face and said, "You have been a prostitute to your fellow criminals. I know this."

"To lead the struggle with my fellow militants doesn't make me a prostitute," I said angrily, "Prostitution is the sex selling you have in your society." He became furious and began beating me. After that, they returned me to the cell where I went on a hunger strike until I was taken for the second trial.

THE SECOND TRIAL

During the trial, the judge said, "Though you didn't confess to the charges made against you, there are still other charges you weren't tried for."

"If you want to repeat the trial," I declared, "you will have to hear me speak of the torture I received and why I carried arms. Your court is not a just one"

He interrupted me to say, "You are sentenced to fifteen years." "Let it be fifty years," I said. "For me and the others to be in prison will not end the revolution." Seeing me so indifferent to his sentence, the judge tried to give me a longer sentence. Shouts of protest echoed in the court. About 50 people from my relatives were there. They encouraged me saying "Don't care if it was a life sentence." In fact, I didn't care. When I joined the armed struggle, I was well aware of the road I had chosen. What I expected was either to be martyred in an operation or get seriously injured, for example, paralyzed. To be sentenced to a definite period, however long, is nothing in comparison to those who received life sentences.

BACK IN RAMLE PRISON

After the second trial, I was taken back to Ramle prison. The fellow militants found some time to educate me and helped me in adapting to the new circumstances there.

DAILY LIFE

We were awakened at 5:30 in the morning. At 7: O'clock, we had breakfast and at 7:30 we went to work, making clothes, knitting and working in the kitchen and garden. At 2:00 PM we had lunch and

from 3 to 4 we had classes. After four, we had sports until we were called back to our rooms. At night, we used our time to read and have political discussions.

EDUCATION

Learning and education were our main concerns. At the beginning, Rasmeya Audi started teaching me Arabic. Having many other duties to fulfill, she was replaced by Iman Smadi, who taught me and other illiterate militants. Before imprisonment, Iman had a job in an illiteracy campaign. Of the illiterate militants in the prison, I can mention Aysha Kiwan who was arrested on her way to the West Bank. The Zionist authorities took her child from her, sent him back to Jordan and brought her to prison. She is still in Ramle prison.

Besides Arabic, educated militants taught us English, French, and Hebrew. Each night, everyone was asked to discuss certain topics they had studied. This would be in the presence of other militants. Of course, this activity and sitting together at night was forbidden by the prison authorities. However, we were capable of managing our way.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

We used to celebrate all the Palestinian occasions. We prepared good programs, of course secretly. Whenever we were discovered, we would be punished by being put in solitary cells. The other punishment was depriving us of listening to the radio and watching T.V., which we were normally allowed to do for an half-hour each day. Also, visits would be forbidden. However, the news we heard on television or radio was of little interest to us. As for visits, they were only 30 minutes long, and they took place in

the presence of two policewomen.

On the occasion of Zionist national celebrations — “Independence Day” for example, we went on strike and sang Palestinian national and revolutionary songs. They responded by calling in soldiers to beat us and put us in solitary cells. This is what our life was like in the Zionist prisons.

WORLD MILITANTS IMPRISONED FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE

"This revolution is not the march of Palestine and the Arab nation only; it is the march of free people all over the world."

Yasser Arafat

This slogan of the universal dimension of the Palestinian revolution has been realized by many militants of various nationalities from all over the world. Some of them are still imprisoned in the Zionist jails and continue their struggle along with their Palestinian fellow militants for the Palestinian cause in which both believe and for which both were imprisoned.

In the following lines, Aida Saad and Rima Tannus give an account of their recollections of Terre Fleener, Brigit Schultz and Ludvina Jansen, the three international militants they met in Ramle prison.

TERRE FLEENER

She is a young American woman from Texas. Her enthusiasm for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's just struggle is boundless. She is a Palestinian as far as the commitment to the Palestinian cause is concerned. The only way we thought of her as a non-Palestinian was that she spoke a foreign language. Yet, her commitment was derived from the wrongs and injustices done to the Palestinian people which she understood from some Palestinians she met during the period she was working as a hostess in the Kuwait Airlines.

At first, she was put in the Zionist Women's sec-



Terre Fleener

tion of the prison. Her reason for her demand was that as long as she was sentenced, she had the right to live in the section where she would feel herself most comfortable and that the Zionist women had nothing to do with her world of thought.

After her transfer to our section, she took part in the teaching process and began teaching English. She also taught us Yoga exercises. Once, during a hunger strike, the prison authorities attacked us with tear gas. Terre received some burns on her face. She insisted on continuing the strike in spite of the beating she received, along with us, from the Zionist jailers and prisoners. She was very active and had a strong personality. Eventually, the prison authorities "punished" her by taking her back to the Zionist women's section. Yet our contacts with her continued.

BRIGIT SCHULTZ

She is a West German militant. For the first sixteen months, the Zionist authorities denied that they held Brigit as a prisoner. Finally, a visit by her parents

to 'Israel' forced the authorities to reveal her presence. All that period, she was imprisoned in a solitary cell in an isolated part of the prison. Whenever they took her to court, they dressed her in black clothing. Only two or three months before our release, she was unlocked from the solitary cell and brought to the Zionist women's section. We were forbidden to talk to her, but we managed to speak through the fence separating our sections.

Once while she was in the solitary cell, we heard her crying. Later on, we learned that she was being beaten after the jailers found her drawing a dome with a flag raised on it on the wall of her cell. The jailers assumed that the dome was that of the Al-Agsa Mosque (a Muslim holy shrine in Jerusalem) and the flag was the Palestinian one.

LUDVINA JANSEN

She is a Dutch militant. She was no less a strong and dedicated militant than Terre or Brigit. After a fierce struggle, the prison authorities transferred her to our section. She learned Arabic and became capable of expressing herself. She participated in the teaching process. She learned by heart some lines of certain Palestinian national songs. The ones she liked the best were "Ya Fida'ai, Khalli Rassasak Sayib" (Commando, keep your bullets hitting the target) and "Li-ajliki ya Madinatussalat, ya Kodsso, Oussalli" (For you, city of prayers – Jerusalem – I pray).

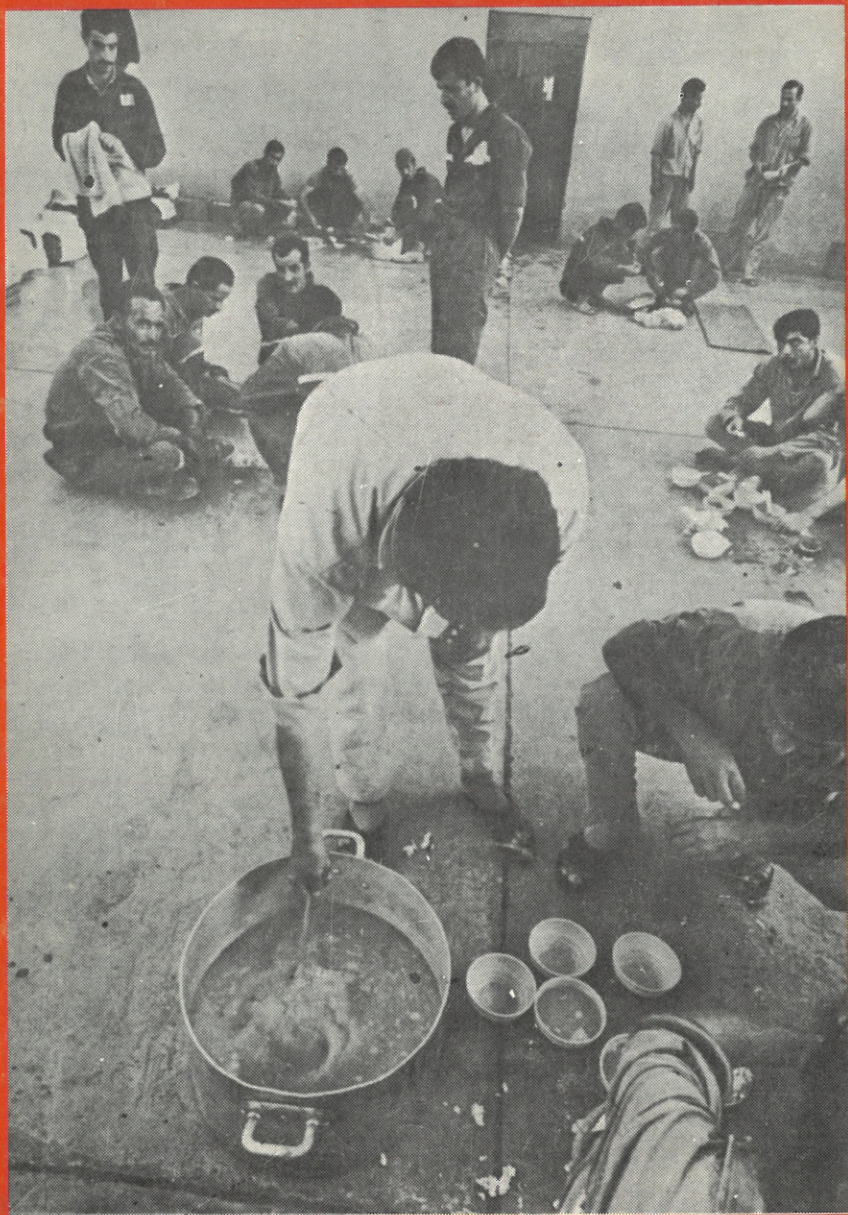
Once, Ludvina was sent a guitar by the Dutch Consul. She liked singing very much. The prison authorities offered her sheet music for certain Israeli songs so that she would play them. Ludvina refused to accept them and the authorities were upset to see her sitting with us singing "Ya Fida'ai" and "Ya

Kodsso" and playing these songs on her guitar. Their reaction was to lock us all up in solitary cells. When this incident was repeated, the jailers tried to take away the guitar. As they continued to insist on seizing it, she broke the guitar and threw its fragments at them. Yet we went on singing, indifferent to their retaliation.

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

Many times, Terre, Brigitt and Ludvina refused the presents sent to them on certain occasions, Christmas for example, by the consuls of their respective countries. Their reasoning was that they reject any private presents they receive separate from us. They even refused the special uniform given by the prison authorities to the Zionist prisoners and insisted on wearing the uniform we were given. More significant was their refusal to go on the periodic leaves, that occurred every two months, and were granted to the Zionist prisoners. Their argument was that they were imprisoned for the same cause as we were, so they would not accept privileges or special treatment that differed from us.

Finally, we promise Terre, Brigit, Lodvine and the militants all over the world to stay faithful to our joint principles and belief in the freedom and dignity of human beings.



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